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three ways**

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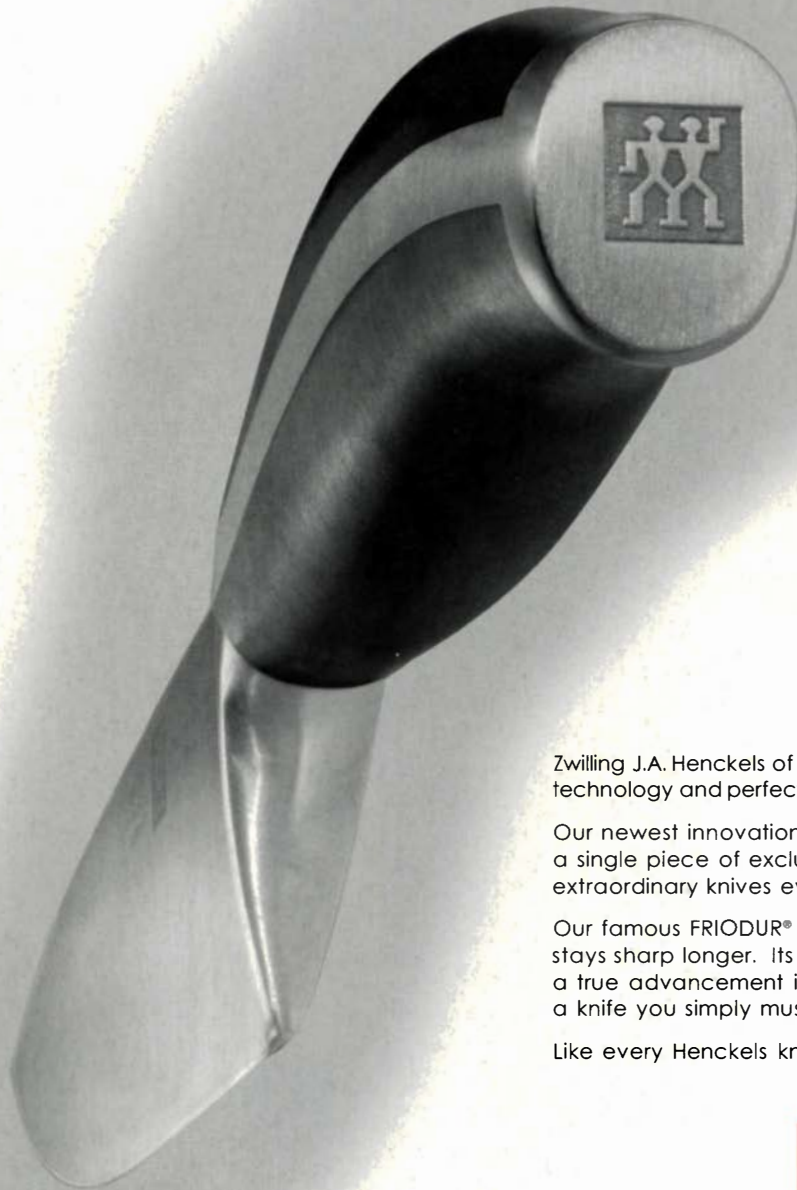
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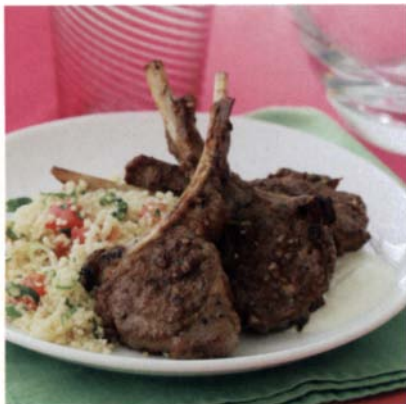
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APRIL / MAY 2006 ISSUE 78



RECIPE FOLDOUT

86c Quick & Delicious
big flavor, little effort



ON THE COVER

38 Salad for Dinner



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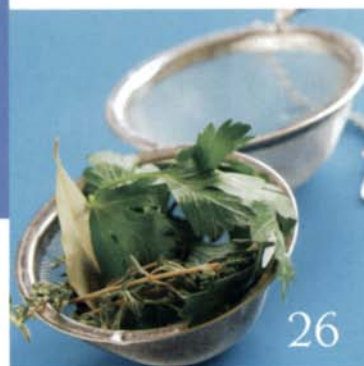
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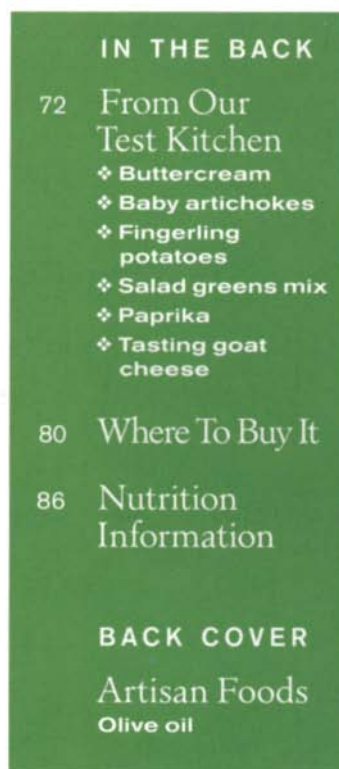
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With one simple cake, two fabulous frostings, and endless flavorings, layer cakes are a snap to make

by Katherine Eastman Seeley



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- ◆ **QUICK**
Under 45 minutes
- ◆ **MAKE AHEAD**
Can be completely prepared ahead but may need reheating and a garnish to serve
- ◆ **MOSTLY MAKE AHEAD**
Can be partially prepared ahead but will need a few finishing touches before serving
- ◆ **VEGETARIAN**
May contain eggs and dairy ingredients

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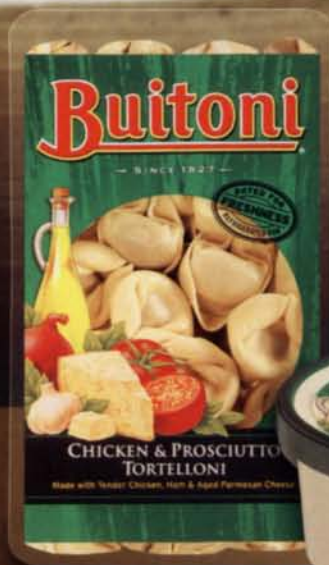


64 Layer Cakes

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Recipes for Any Kind of Weather

Note: You may have to double or halve the recipes to suit your needs.

Spring weather can be crazy: gentle one day, blustery the next. But that's not necessarily a bad thing because it means you can enjoy both summery and wintry fare, depending on the weather. On pleasant days, toss together a light salad or fire up the grill. And when April showers (or snow) come your way, cozy up with a warm, hearty braise or stew. Whatever Mother Nature blows your way this season, we have plenty of delicious ideas for dinner to keep you going.

Spring entertaining menus

A Casual Easter Sunday

Three make-aheads—the fennel confit, the brown-butter sauce, and the dessert—mean this special menu is easy to create.

Creamy Asparagus Soup, p. 17



Lamb Rib Chops
with Caramelized Fennel
Confit, p. 10

Steamed Baby Artichokes
with Lemony Brown-Butter
Sauce, p. 46

Garlic-Parmesan Bread, p. 42



Chocolate-Raspberry
Cookies & Cream, p. 42

To drink:

Serve a New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc with the soup and a young Cabernet Sauvignon or Cabernet blend with the lamb chops.

Mostly Make-Ahead Osso Buco Party

You can make the osso buco two days ahead. A day ahead, make the goat cheese spread and the vanilla butter cake. Before your guests arrive, whip the cream and assemble the cake, start the risotto, and set out the goat cheese spread. Once guests arrive, reheat the osso buco and make the gremolata.

Goat Cheese Spread with
Herbs and Olive Oil, p. 41



Osso Buco, p. 45

Saffron Risotto, p. 56



Four-Layer Cake with Whipped
Cream and Berries, p. 67

To drink:

A crisp New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc would pair well with the goat cheese appetizer, while a Chianti Classico is a good choice for the Osso Buco.

Light, bright meals for mild days

Spice-Rubbed Tilapia with
Tomatillo, Black Bean &
Mango Salad, p. 62

Serve with warm corn tortillas.

Spice-Crusted Salmon, p. 86c
Lemony Tahini Sauce over Steamed
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or Carrots, p. 49

Spicy Korean-Style Pork
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Serve with short-grain white or brown rice.

Saffron and Shrimp Risotto, p. 59
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One-dish suppers for cool evenings

Paprika Chicken with Kielbasa, p. 76
Serve over buttered egg noodles.

Sausage and Leek Risotto, p. 59

Chicken Thighs with Braised
Fennel, Scallions & Olives, p. 86c

Serve over couscous.



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from the editor

Buried in buttercream

I have a confession to make. When I die, I'd like to be buried in buttercream.

And not just any buttercream, but the luscious, billowy Vanilla Buttercream in Katherine Seeley's article, "A Piece of Cake," on p. 64.

I think it was the side-by-side tasting of six flavors of this sophisticated cake frosting that started my love affair. After that day in the test kitchen, I had to go home and make one of the layer cakes just so I could lick the beaters clean of this ethereal stuff.

Until I had a chance to taste the results and follow the recipes myself, I'd been second-guessing our decision to devote six pages of the magazine to an art—making layer cakes from scratch—that seems lost to the world of ready mixes and canned frosting. But after a Sunday spent making some of these cakes (both the buttercream-frosted and the whipped-cream-filled), I real-

ized that there's hardly a cooking craft more satisfying.

Not only does baking a cake fill your house with that heady aroma, but it also transforms your kitchen into a comforting mess of batter bowls, cooling racks, cake crumbs, and buttercream smears. By the time you finish assembling and decorating the cake, you feel like an architectural genius (or a freeform modern artist, depending on your dexterity). And all this before devouring something so delicious that you wonder how those imposters at the grocery store can call themselves cakes.

But forgive me for carrying on about one article. As in every issue of *Fine Cooking*, this one has lots of ways to get busy and messy in the kitchen, whether it's stirring up one of Lidia's delicious risottos or roasting chicken for a beauti-



ful main dish salad like the one on our cover (see "Spring Fling," p. 38).

—Susie Middleton, editor

P.S. A simple but flavorful condiment like my recipe for caramelized fennel (below) is a great way to dress up a few lamb rib chops for a scaled-down Easter dinner for you and a friend or two.

Caramelized Fennel Confit

Yields ½ cup; serves four as a condiment.

Pair this delicious condiment with little lamb rib chops, sautéed pork medallions, or even

a seared filet. You could also fold a little into mashed potatoes. If you think of it when you trim the fennel bulb, reserve some of the fronds for garnish.

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil (more if needed)
1 large or two small fennel bulbs (about 1¼ pound), tops trimmed, quartered, cored, and very thinly sliced crosswise
Kosher salt
2 tablespoons Sambuca (anise-flavored liqueur)

In a large (10-inch) straight-sided sauté pan with a lid, melt the butter with the olive oil over low to medium-low heat. Add

the fennel and ½ teaspoon salt, stir well, and cover. Cook slowly, stirring occasionally, until very limp, about 15 minutes. Raise the heat to medium and cook uncovered, stirring frequently, until the fennel is a deep golden brown, 10 to 15 minutes more. If the fennel begins to stick but is not all golden brown, add a little water to the pan. Remove the pan from the heat to add the Sambuca, then return it to the heat to deglaze all of the browned bits by stirring and scraping with a wooden spoon. Serve the caramelized fennel warm, or let it cool and keep it in a covered container in the refrigerator for up to five days.

Seared Lamb Rib Chops

Serves four.

Season 8 lamb rib chops well with salt and pepper. In a 10-inch skillet, heat 1 tablespoon butter and 1 tablespoon olive oil over medium-high heat. When the butter has melted, add the chops and sear (without moving) until well browned on one side, about 3 minutes. Flip the chops and sear the second side for about 3 minutes. They should have a deep-brown crust but will be pink (medium-rare) in the middle. Remove to a plate and cover loosely with foil. Let rest a few minutes before serving warm.



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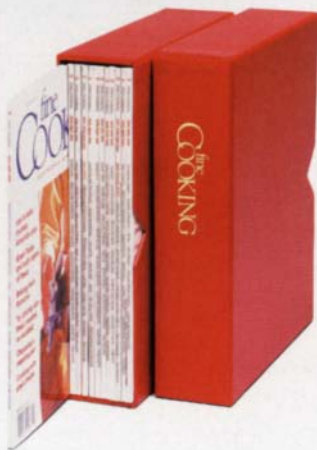
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from our readers

A new view on avoiding onion tears

I enjoy your magazine. I have a tip to suggest after reading "Fighting onion tears" in the Food Science department of *Fine Cooking* #77. I would like to add: Wear your contact lenses while prepping onions—no tears. Just make sure you wash your hands well before removing your lenses, as your eyes will smart if any onion juices remain on your fingers.

—Beth Belanca, via email

Searching for kid-friendly recipes

Thanks for your fantastic magazine. I appreciate your approach to fine cooking from the perspective of a regular cook in a regular kitchen. I have two young children, ages 6 and 9, and I am constantly trying to find that lovely dinner we can all appreciate; would you consider exploring cooking for (and with) children for one of your issues?

—Janice Bedayn, via email

Editors' reply: We're so glad you enjoy the magazine. We wish we had space to run articles specifically tailored to households with kids, but since our mission is to provide great technique and ingredient info for all cooks, we rarely get a chance to focus that tightly. We hope that our special Quick & Delicious pullout section in every issue is a help

with your weeknight cooking. And don't forget that baking articles—like the one on making your own custom muffins in *Fine Cooking* #77—are great for getting kids involved in cooking. We also promise to keep kids in mind when we design the recipe mix in each issue. Stand by for some delicious (and crowd-pleasing) quesadillas in the next issue.

Dog-gone good magazine

I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoy your magazine in general and your special issues in particular. My dog, Lucy, also enjoys them—my first copy of *Quick & Delicious* was so spattered from continual cooking that she found it quite delicious and tore it to shreds. I now keep the second one far from her reach. Thanks for a great magazine.

—Karen Greco-Buta, via email

Correction: In the recipe for Bourbon Pumpkin Tart with Walnut Streusel, published in *Fine Cooking* #74 on pages 52–53, we called for a 10-inch fluted tart pan with a removable bottom. We should have called for an 11-inch tart pan (measured across the top of the pan between the two widest points). The sides of this pan are just short of an inch high.

Getting the most from our recipes**How to follow a recipe**

- ❖ Before you start, read the recipe from start to finish so there are no surprises.
- ❖ Before actually starting to cook or bake, gather all the necessary ingredients and equipment. Prepare the ingredients according to the directions in the ingredient list (see "Watch those modifiers" at right for more on this).
- ❖ For determining doneness, always rely first on the recipe's sensory descriptor, such as "cook until golden brown." Consider any times given in a recipe merely as a guide for when to start checking for doneness.

Watch those modifiers

A recipe ingredient list contains words such as "diced" and "chopped" that tell you how to prepare each ingredient for the recipe, but what you may not realize is that the placement of these "preparation modifiers" in the ingredient line is as important as the modifier itself. Take, for example, the following two similar lines:

1 cup rice, cooked

1 cup cooked rice

The first line is telling you to take 1 cup of rice and cook it; the second line is calling for 1 cup of rice that has already been cooked. The difference between the two is about 2 cups of cooked rice, and that can make a big difference in the outcome of a recipe.

***fine* Cooking**

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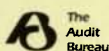
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Martha Holmberg



Lidia Bastianich



Jennifer Armentrout

Martha Holmberg ("Spring Fling," p. 38) traded a snow shovel for an umbrella when she moved from Connecticut to Portland, Oregon, a year ago. Formerly the publisher of *Fine Cooking*, she is now the food editor at *The Oregonian* newspaper, where she's learned that rainy winter afternoons are great times to cook and that the patient shall be rewarded in spring and summer by Portland's glorious weather and amazing farmers' markets.

Born in Austria and raised in Spain, cooking teacher **Perla Meyers** ("Osso Buco," p. 43) is the author of eight cookbooks. Her latest title is *How to Peel A Peach: And 1,002 Other Things Every Good Cook Needs to Know*.

Jennifer Armentrout ("Vegetables, Steamed & Sauced," p. 46) is *Fine Cooking's* test kitchen manager and recipe editor. Last summer, she bought a share in an organic farm's CSA (Community-Supported Agriculture) program and found herself inundated with beautiful, fresh produce. Fast, simple steaming became one of her favorite methods for cooking her way through the bounty.

Contributing editor **Tony Rosenfeld** ("Pork Tenderloin," p. 50) recently opened the second branch of b.good, a healthful fast food restaurant in Boston. He says, "As much as I like being part owner of a couple of restaurants, it's not as glamorous as it sounds—most of my days are spent chopping onions, making sauces, and sweeping the kitchen floors." When he's not at the restaurants or developing recipes for *Fine Cooking*, Tony is hard at work on a cookbook about roast

chicken, to be published by The Taunton Press next winter.

Italian chef, cookbook author, and television personality, **Lidia Matticchio Bastianich** ("The Best Risotto," p. 54) is a natural teacher. She's so compelling in her books and on her PBS show that we knew she was the perfect author for our Cooking Without Recipes story on making perfect risotto. Lidia is the award-winning chef and co-owner of New York City restaurants Felidia, Becco, and the newly opened Del Posto. Her latest cookbook is *Lidia's Family Table*.

Leslie Glover Pendleton ("Tilapia," p. 60) believes that "tilapia should be on everyone's weekly menu—it's inexpensive, it's easy to find, and it's always in season." For many years, Leslie worked as a full-time food editor; now she's a recipe developer, cooking teacher, and food stylist. A passionate seafood lover, she is the author of *Simply Shrimp, Salmon and (Fish) Steaks*. She also serves on the curriculum advisory board for Schooling Chefs, a sustainable seafood training program for culinary professionals.

During her career as a recipe developer, **Katherine Eastman Seeley** ("A Piece of Cake," p. 64) has made lots of layer cakes. But that doesn't mean her recipe file is stuffed with cake recipes: She has streamlined her cake-making to one easy base cake and two versatile frostings to make dozens of cake combinations. Katherine honed her baking skills at the French Culinary Institute and in top New York kitchens, including Bayard's and Bouley Bakery. She writes about food and develops recipes from her home in Norwalk, Connecticut.



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Asparagus

is at its best in spring

BY RUTH LIVELY

One of my earliest jobs was to help my mother harvest asparagus. I used an old, dull paring knife, plunging it in the ground and cutting the spears just below the soil. She taught me to cut only the fat spears, leaving the skinny ones to grow and feed the plant. In spring we ate asparagus almost every night and froze lots for fall and winter. But we always ran out long before the next spring came, so our palates were primed when it started growing again. Asparagus was my first vegetable love, and my enthusiasm for this sweet, elegant vegetable has never waned. Although it's available much of the year, its true season lasts only a few glorious weeks in April and May. So now is the time to make the most of it.

I prefer thicker spears, which are more tender and, to my taste, sweeter than their thinner cousins. While green asparagus is a classic, these days you often have a choice of white

or even purple asparagus. White varieties are mounded with soil to keep sunlight out; because the spears develop in darkness, they don't produce chlorophyll, so they never turn green. Their skin is slightly tougher, and their flavor is milder and doesn't seem as sweet. Purple asparagus, a relative newcomer, is an attractive alternative to green. But be forewarned: Unless you apply vinegar or lemon juice to the spears before cooking, they will discolor.

Try different cooking methods

For pure, clean asparagus flavor, I like to just boil or steam the spears. For boiling, I use a wide shallow pan filled with about 3 inches of water. For steaming, I use a pasta pot with a perforated insert. I fill the pot so that about an inch of water fully enters the insert—this boils the thicker, tougher bases of the spears, while the rest only steams.

Grilling, sautéing, and roasting bring out a sweet nuttiness in asparagus and add a deeper flavor. The

How do you know it's fresh?

Asparagus is commonly sold in bundles of about a pound standing upright in a tray of water. Choose fresh-looking, firm spears with tight tips. Smell them first to make sure they don't give off an unpleasant odor (if they do, they're old). Check the cut ends of the stalks; they should be moist, not dried out. If dried ends are all that's available, cut about half an inch off the bottom. To make sure they keep their freshness, stand asparagus bundles in about an inch of water in a jar or a shallow tray and keep them in the refrigerator. Cook the spears within two or three days.

To grow your own, start now

Buy ready-to-plant roots (see p. 80), called crowns, in early spring, and cover them with moistened peat moss or soil until you're ready to put them in the ground. Dig a trench 6 inches deep, add some manure or compost to the bottom, and work it in. Create a mound of soil for each crown, spacing the mounds 12 to 18 inches apart. Place each crown on a mound with the pointed growing tip facing up. Refill the trench to the top, firming the soil as you go, and water well. The following spring, don't harvest any spears; the second spring, harvest only lightly. From the third spring on, you can harvest all the spears that come up.

simplest preparation is to just toss the spears with olive oil, a little salt, and pepper before putting them in a 400°F oven, a hot skillet, or on the grill. (For more ideas, see the sidebar below.)

Asparagus just plain is pretty hard to beat, but some foods pair particularly well with it. These include orange and lemon, garlic, ginger, sesame oil, hard grated cheeses, eggs, mushrooms, and shellfish, particularly shrimp.



Simple side dishes and more—starring juicy, tender asparagus

For a zingy appetizer or side dish, sprinkle roasted or grilled asparagus with finely grated lemon zest and crushed toasted nuts (walnuts, pine nuts, or almonds would work well).

For an extra dash of flavor, drizzle roasted or grilled spears with Asian sesame oil, then sprinkle on a little salt and some lightly toasted sesame seeds (white, black, or a mixture of the two).

Dress up steamed asparagus simply and deliciously with a sesame-lemon mayonnaise. Add 3 tablespoons Asian sesame oil and 3 tablespoons lemon juice to homemade or good-quality bottled mayo. Drizzle over the asparagus or use the mayo as a dipping sauce.

Make a bright, flavorful asparagus and shrimp pasta. Cut the spears into 1-inch pieces and blanch them briefly, then sauté the shrimp and asparagus with minced garlic and strips of sun-dried tomato. Finish with a little grated lemon zest and a squeeze of lemon juice and toss with bow ties or any small pasta shape.

Make a colorful and appetizing niçoise-style composed salad with steamed, boiled, or roasted asparagus, strips of roasted red pepper, canned cannellini beans or chick peas, hard-boiled eggs, black olives, and grilled or oil-packed tuna on a bed of butter or romaine lettuce. Scatter with some toasted pine nuts and drizzle with a lemon or red-wine-vinegar vinaigrette.

Creamy Asparagus Soup

Yields 7 to 8 cups; serves six to eight.

Use either thick or thin asparagus spears. This soup is also delicious served cold.

2 pounds asparagus
3½ tablespoons unsalted butter
2 small celery ribs, coarsely chopped (about 1 cup)
1 large yellow onion, coarsely chopped (about 2 cups)
1 large leek (white and green parts), halved lengthwise, thoroughly rinsed, and thinly sliced crosswise (keep dark-green parts separate from light-green and white parts)
8 whole peppercorns
5 sprigs flat-leaf parsley
2 sprigs thyme
Kosher salt
2 medium cloves garlic, chopped
1 large or 3 small red potatoes (about ½ pound), peeled and cut into ½-inch dice (1 heaping cup)
¼ cup heavy cream
Freshly ground white pepper

Snap off the tough ends of the asparagus, but don't discard them. Cut about 1½ inches of the tips off the asparagus spears and cut the spears crosswise in thirds; set the spears and tips aside separately.

Melt 1½ tablespoons of the butter in a 3-quart saucepan over medium-low heat. Add the asparagus ends, about half of the celery, the onion, and the dark-green parts of the leek. Cook uncovered, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables look very soft, about 30 minutes (if the vegetables show any sign of browning, reduce the heat to low). Add 6 cups cold water and the peppercorns, parsley, thyme, and ½ teaspoon salt. Bring to a boil over

high heat, reduce the heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes to make a flavorful vegetable stock.

Meanwhile, bring a 2-quart pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the asparagus tips and cook until just tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Drain in a colander, shower with cold water to stop the cooking, and drain again. Set aside.

In another 3-quart (or larger) saucepan, melt the remaining 2 tablespoons butter over medium-low heat. Add the white and light-green sliced leek and the remaining celery and season with a generous pinch of salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the leeks look soft but not browned, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute more. Add the asparagus spears and the potato. Set a wire mesh strainer over the pot and pour in the stock from the other pot; discarding the solids. Stir well and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover, and cook at a lively simmer until the potatoes and asparagus are very tender, about 20 minutes. Turn off the heat and let cool slightly.

Purée the soup in a blender in two or three batches. Return the puréed soup to the soup pot, add the cream, and stir well. Reheat the soup gently over medium-low heat. Season to taste with more salt and a large pinch of white pepper. Ladle the soup into bowls or soup plates and scatter in the asparagus tips, distributing them evenly among the servings.

Ruth Lively cooks, writes, and gardens in New Haven, Connecticut. ♦

No ordinary oil

If you love experimenting with new ingredients, these oils deserve a whirl in your kitchen

BY REBECCA FREEDMAN

1 Great for stir-fries

This oil piqued our interest because of its unusual source: tea seeds. But it doesn't taste like tea; it has a neutral flavor that's well suited to cooking, so we gave it a spin to see if it could hold up to high heat. We're happy to say that it did, beautifully—a test stir-fry left our

kitchen practically smoke-free. *Republic of Tea Stir Fry Tea Oil*, 17 ounces for \$14.50 at Republicoftea.com (800-711-8768).

2 Sesame oil that's lighter

Some Asian sesame oils can hit you over the head with their heavy, muddy flavor, so we were pleased with the surprisingly light, clean flavor and mouth-feel of this one. Its fresh toastiness would give a great boost to any Asian stir-fry, noodle dish, or soup. *La Tourangelle Toasted Sesame Oil*, \$12.99 for 500 milliliters at lgourmet.com (877-446-8763).

3 Grapeseed oil with a truffle twist

With its high smoke point, grapeseed oil is a standout for sautéing. But this oil from Cuisine Perel comes with a bonus: a touch of white truffle flavor that makes it delicious in a mayonnaise or scrambled eggs. *Cuisine Perel White Truffle Grapeseed Oil*, \$14.99 for 6.5 ounces at Cardullos.com (800-491-8288). Also available at [Whole Foods Markets](http://WholeFoodsMarkets.com).

4 A notable nut oil

Sure, you've seen walnut oil and hazelnut oil around, but pecan oil? We recently discovered J. Leblanc's version, and we're glad we did—it's toasty, aromatic, and tastes very pecan-y. For a nice change of pace, set aside your walnut oil and whisk some of this into your next vinaigrette. *J. Leblanc Pecan Oil*, \$30.95 for 8 ounces at Gourmetcountry.com (800-665-9123) or \$33 at Earthy.com (800-367-4709).





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What's the difference between extra-virgin, virgin, and other olive oils?

—Trish Healy, Baltimore, Maryland

A Carol Firenze responds: The difference is essentially qualitative. Extra-virgin is the highest-quality olive oil: It tastes better, has lower acidity levels, and retains more nutrients than other olive oils.

Both extra-virgin and virgin olive oil are produced from olives solely by mechanical processes—that is, with no chemicals—and without the use of heat, which can deteriorate or alter the oil. After the olives are ground to a paste, the oil is either cold-extracted using a centrifuge or cold-pressed using a hydraulic press.

Extra-virgin olive oil must pass a wide range of chemical tests. Its acidity must be 0.8% or less (acidity refers to the oil's oleic-free fatty acid; the lower the acid, the better the quality of the oil). The oil must also be free of defects in aroma and flavor, as determined by a panel of certified experts.

Although extracted by the same methods, virgin olive oil doesn't meet all the criteria for extra-virgin: Its acidity limit is higher (up to 2%), and minor defects are tolerated.

Other oils labeled just "olive oil" are usually a blend of refined and virgin olive oils. Refined means that defects found in the base oil are removed by using charcoal or other chemical filters.

Carol Firenze is a board member of the California Olive Oil Council and the author of The Passionate Olive: 101 Things to Do with Olive Oil.

How do grocery stores determine such precise lean to fat ratios as 85:15 or 90:10 in ground beef?

—Richard Tuttle, via email

A Steve Keville responds: The most widely used method at the grocery store level involves placing a 3-ounce patty of meat (about the size of a small, flat hamburger) under a heating element on a perforated plate. As the meat becomes well done, all the moisture and fat are cooked out of it, drained, and collected in a test tube. The fat

separates from the other liquid and is measured with a calibrated gauge that translates the measurement into a percentage of lean to fat meat with an accuracy to within 2%. At Whole Foods, we grind fresh batches of meat every day and each batch is tested at our stores.

At other supermarkets, ground meat often arrives already labeled with a lean to fat ratio. In this case, the fat level is determined through a precise chemical analysis used primarily in meat processing plants and by the USDA for large batches of grinds, generally 2,000 pounds or more at a time.

Steve Keville is Whole Foods Market's national meat buyer.

I've always wondered about the best way to clean citrus fruit before zesting. Is a simple wash enough to remove pesticide residues?

—Marjory Bryce, Deering, New Hampshire

A Lori Longbotham responds: For me, most of the joy in a lemon is in the zest. The juice is wonderfully refreshing and perfect for balancing flavors in a dish but it's the zest that has an insistent lemon flavor. The zest is not the entire peel, but only the thin, outermost, bright-yellow layer of the lemon, with none of the underlying white pith.

The first thing to do before zesting a lemon is to wash it thoroughly. Most of the insecticides and fungicides used on commercially grown citrus fruits are washed off in the packing house after harvesting, and the lemons are disinfected. To replace the natural wax that is removed during the washing process, the lemons are then coated with a small quantity of water-soluble food-grade wax for protection during shipping and to prevent shrinkage. The waxes are approved for use on foods and meet the requirements of the FDA. It's advisable, however, to wash lemons thoroughly, even scrub them with soap and warm water, to remove the wax. If you want to avoid the pesticides completely, use organic lemons, but even those should be washed thoroughly before using as they may also be coated with wax.

Lori Longbotham is the author of Lemon Zest: More Than 175 Recipes with a Twist. ♦

Have a question of general interest about cooking? Send it to Q&A, Fine Cooking, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by email to fcqa@taunton.com, and we'll find a cooking professional with the answer.

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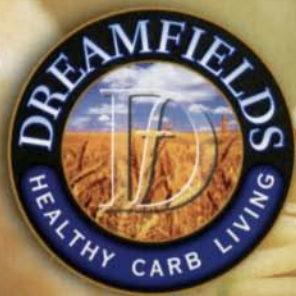
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The anatomy of a wine glass

Thickness. Thinner glass is better but also more breakable, so search for glasses that strike a balance between delicacy and sturdiness. The lip of the glass should be cut and polished (rather than rolled and beaded), which guides wine smoothly to your palate.

Shape and size. An egg-shaped bowl with a narrower top than bottom concentrates the aromas of the wine. The glass should hold at least 12 ounces. (But don't fill it more than halfway. You need room to swirl, and the wine needs room to show off its aromas.)

Color and texture. The bowl should be uncut, uncolored, and unetched so you can fully enjoy the color of the wine.

Material. Crystal is the best kind of glass for wine because its surface has microscopic pits and grooves that enable wine to cling to the inside of the glass, further concentrating its aromas in the glass.

A Guide to Buying Stemware

From the basics to the big splurges

BY TIM GAISER

Shopping for wineglasses can be intimidating. All those sizes. All those shapes. Which ones do you really need? While the right glassware can definitely heighten your perception and enjoyment of a wine, there's no need to rush out and purchase several sets of expensive crystal in all sorts of shapes. For the most part, one set—or maybe two—of good all-purpose glasses is all you need. And many high-quality glasses are surprisingly affordable.

The two essentials: a goblet and a flute

Wine glass styles break down into two basic styles: goblets and flutes. If you're setting out to purchase your first set of stemware, goblets are a must. And if you serve sparkling wine, you need flutes, too.

Flutes are tall, narrow glasses used for sparkling wine and Champagne. The long, slender bowl shows off the tiny bubbles as they trail to the surface. And the narrow opening focuses the delicate aromas of the wine.

Goblets, in all their myriad forms, are used for white and red table wines—and in some cases,

Great glasses that won't break the bank

ALL PURPOSE:

Crate & Barrel Coco (14 ounces), \$2.95 at Crateandbarrel.com

Libbey Vino Grande (16 ounces), \$52.22 for a set of 12 at Amazon.com

FOR WHITE:

Riedel Vivant white wine (12.38 ounces), \$39.95 for a set of four at Target.com

Pottery Barn Spiegelau white wine (12 ounces), \$72 for a set of six at Potterybarn.com

FOR RED:

Riedel Vivant red wine (12.63 ounces), \$39.95 for a set of four at Target.com

Pottery Barn Spiegelau red wine (15 ounces), \$72 for a set of six at Potterybarn.com

FLUTES:

Crate & Barrel Natalie (8 ounces), \$3.95 each at Crateandbarrel.com

Spiegelau Vino Grande (6.5 ounces), \$36.99 for a set of six at Wineglasses.com

dessert wines. Goblets made specifically for red wine are generally larger than those for white wine, because the intense aromas and flavors found in many red wines need more room to develop. But I think a good all-purpose goblet, like the one shown on the facing page, can work well for anything from delicate whites to robust reds.

My cupboards are filled with an array of stemware, but nine times out of ten, I reach for my favorite all-purpose glass, the Riedel Vinum Chianti/Zinfandel glass. It sells for about \$14.99, which is fairly reasonable. But you can find nice all-purpose glasses for even less than that (see bottom sidebar, facing page).

Above & beyond: pricey glasses for pricey wines

If your cellar is stocked with expensive age-worthy wines, then at some point it would be a good idea to invest in some fine crystal. Riedel Crystal of Austria, one of the finest producers of crystal in the world, makes dozens of different glasses, many in specific shapes to match the different aromas and flavors of various grape varieties. Their Vinum (machine-made crystal) and Sommelier (hand-blown crystal) series are both outstanding. The large Burgundy and Bordeaux glasses in the Sommelier series set the standard for all fine crystal. Both are priced at about \$95 per glass.

The charm of tumblers



You don't necessarily need stemware to enjoy wine. Follow the lead of trattorias and bistros where tumblers are often used for wine glasses. Tumblers are perfectly suited to fruity, robust, everyday drinking wines. And casual tumblers are much less worrisome when you're dining outdoors.

Contributing editor Tim Gaiser is a master sommelier. ♦

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Winning tip

Minimize food processor cleanup

I love the speed and consistency of a food processor, but washing all the parts afterwards can be a chore. To greatly reduce the cleanup, I stretch plastic wrap over the top of the work bowl before attaching the cover and feed tube and pressing start. When I'm done, the only parts that need to be washed are the bowl and blade. Of course, I do this only when I'm not adding ingredients through the feed tube.

—Mike Weiderhold, Springfield, Virginia

A prize for the best tip

We want your best tips—we'll pay for the ones we publish—and we'll give a prize to the cleverest tip in each issue. Write to Tips, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506 or email fc tips@taunton.com.

The prize for this issue's winner: Five-Piece Fagor Duo Combi Pressure Cooker Set; value, \$140.



Organize your shopping list

I used to go up and down the supermarket aisles in search of ingredients that were randomly ordered on my shopping list. But now I organize my shopping list with categories: produce, deli, dairy, frozen, etc. If you know your store's layout, you can even put the categories in sequential order. This has made my shopping more efficient, and I'm less likely to miss something on my list.

—Amy McGowen, Jupiter, Florida



When all else fails, clean with baking soda

After repeated soakings and scrubbings failed to clean a pan with a layer of scorched milk firmly encrusted on the bottom, I sprinkled on a layer of baking soda, added enough water to cover, and waited a couple of hours. The baking soda lifted the burnt milk, making cleanup easy. I've since tried this with other stuck-on foods, and it always works.

—Mary Jane Felgenhauer, Carrboro, North Carolina

Protect your magazine while cooking

When I'm baking from a *Fine Cooking* recipe, I don't want my magazine to get covered with flour and splashes of batter. So I open the issue to the page I need, fold it, and insert it into a clear gallon-size zip-top bag. The magazine fits perfectly, and it stays nice and clean.

—Amy Baruch, Boise, Idaho

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A silicone mat keeps cutting boards stable

I've found another use for my silicone baking mat. I place it under a cutting board before I start chopping. It creates a perfect nonslip surface that keeps my cutting board in place.

—Felicia Casolary, Sammamish, Washington

more uses for a tea ball



Make an herb sachet

When I need to make a sachet to hold herbs for flavoring soups or broths but have no cheesecloth, I put my herbs in a large tea ball. The small chain attached to the tea ball allows me to lower the herbs into the simmering pot and to pull out the ball easily when I'm done cooking.

—Kimberly Porter, via email

Dust cocoa powder

When I want to sprinkle a dessert with cocoa powder (or powdered sugar), I put the cocoa in a tea ball and dust it just as I would with a sieve. It gives me more control, especially when sprinkling over small items.

—Shannon Seebach, Las Vegas, Nevada

Use a colander to collect waste in the sink

To save time taking things to the trash can when prepping my ingredients, I put a small colander in the sink and use it as a trash bowl to dispose of peels, eggshells, and other waste. Liquids drip through, but the solids stay put and don't clog the drain (this is especially useful if you don't have a garbage disposal). When I'm done with my prep, it's easy to dump the contents of the colander into the trash.

—Alison McCormick, via email



Cut fine julienne strips with a zester

I love the flavor and color of carrots in my tossed chef's salad, but I don't like the hard texture of chunks or slices. Instead, I grate my carrots with a channel zester for fine julienne strips.

—Marilyn Vogel, Mississauga, Ontario

Dry vermouth stands in for white wine

A good dry white wine is great for cooking, but I don't always have it on hand, nor do I want to open a new bottle for a recipe calling for a small amount. So I use dry vermouth instead. It's good quality, inexpensive, less acidic, and keeps well (although I go through mine pretty quickly). And it's nice to have handy for an occasional martini, too.

—Kara Adanalian, San Francisco, California

Bubble wrap protects nonstick cookware

I recycle the bubble wrap that comes in parcels to use as protective lining between my expensive nonstick pans when stacking them in drawers or cabinets. This prevents the nonstick surface from getting scratched by the bottom of other pans.

—Renée Tate, via email

Quicker mashed potatoes

When making mashed potatoes, I boil whole potatoes with their skins on to save myself the peeling time. When they're tender, I drain them, cut them in half, and place them in a potato ricer. The flesh goes through the ricer while the skins remain inside, where I can easily remove them.

—Bob Zauke, Normal, Illinois

Thin chicken cutlets without a mallet

Instead of flattening chicken breasts with a mallet, I freeze the breasts just enough to get them firm but not rock hard. Then I halve them through the middle to get two thin cutlets. As I heat the pan and prepare other ingredients, the breasts have time to thaw and are ready for cooking.

—Sarah Greene Hopkins, North Yarmouth, Maine ♦

Reach for the Gold!



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BY KIMBERLY Y. MASIBAY

what's new

A knuckle-friendly box grater

This new two-sided box grater gives you all the advantages of Microplane's famously sharp blades, plus a great safety feature: the removable sliding attachment means there's no risk of scraping your knuckles while you grate your cheese. The fine blade makes quick work of grating hard cheeses, ginger, garlic, citrus zest, and chocolate. And the coarse blade lets you neatly grate mounds of vegetables, cheddar, and other soft cheeses in no time. This sturdy grater sports rubber feet for stability, and it comes in black, blue, red, and white. It's \$24.95 at Microplane.com.



A fondue pot with a can-do attitude

In the realm of cookware, plenty of overworked skillets probably wish they could enjoy the laid-back and undeniably chic life of the fondue pot. But here's a little pot that wants it the other way around. The new Five-Function Fondue Set from Chantal is out to prove that a fondue pot can be a kitchen workhorse without losing its cool. When not filled with melted chocolate or cheese, the removable 5-cup porcelain bowl can do double duty as a mixing or serving bowl. The 6-cup stainless-steel pot does meat fondue with ease, and it will gladly work overtime as a saucepot on the stove. And, together, the bowl and pot make a pretty convincing double boiler. The set is \$99.95 at Bakerscatalogue.com.

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bowl



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round-up

Steamer insert options



There may be one right way to steam food (see "Vegetables, Perfectly Steamed & Deliciously Sauced," p. 46), but there are many types of steaming inserts you can use:

1 A folding steamer basket is inexpensive and versatile. These inserts are best for small amounts of food, but they fit in just about any size pot. Nestle one into a deep saucepan or spread the steamer's leaves wide in a skillet. The one above sells for about \$7 at supermarkets.

2 Asparagus steamers aren't just for asparagus.

You can cook lots of asparagus in the tall metal basket, but you can also use it for other lengthy or bulky vegetables such as corn on the cob and artichokes. The model above is \$34.95 at surlatable.com.

3 Bamboo steamers are stackable and pretty. Stack these drum-shaped steamers two or three tiers high to steam a lot at once, including foods that have different cooking times. They were

originally designed to be used in a wok, but you can also set them over a stockpot. A 10-inch, two-tier bamboo steamer is \$14.99 at fantes.com.

4 Non-collapsible metal steamers are durable and roomy. These perforated steamers come in a variety of sizes and shapes; some even have stackable tiers for more capacity. The stainless steel insert above is \$35 at Surlatable.com.

what's the difference?

Cake spatulas: offset or straight?

As we frosted cake after cake for our layer-cakes story ("A Piece of Cake," p. 64), we had ample opportunity to ponder the cake spatula. And we got to wondering: What's the difference between a straight and an offset cake spatula, and is there a right time to use one instead of the other? To answer the question, we talked to a few baking pros. And while they didn't really offer us hard-and-fast rules, they did provide a few sensible tips:

When it comes to choosing a cake spatula, personal preference plays a big role—a spatula, like a knife, should feel comfortable in your hand and suit the task. An offset spatula is ideal for

tasks like spreading batter in a cake pan or frosting the top of a cake, when you need a little distance from the surface to prevent batter or icing from getting on your knuckles. And a small or medium straight spatula works well for frosting the sides of a cake and for smoothing frosting to a level finish.

For both offset and straight cake spatulas, visit Sweetc.com (800-328-6722); prices range from \$2.99 to \$14.19, depending on the size of the tool.

—Laura Giannatempo,
assistant editor



A new fridge that just about has it all

Here's a potential object of desire: The new Maytag Ice₂O has stylish French doors, a spacious bottom freezer, and an ice and filtered-water dispenser in the door.

Until now, if you wanted the convenience of an in-the-door ice dispenser, a French-door fridge wasn't an option for you. But by moving the ice maker out of the freezer drawer and tucking it into the upper corner of the refrigerator, Maytag's designers solved the problem and created a side benefit, too: The freezer is now much roomier. And the refrigerator section still has ample shelf space for baking sheets and party trays.

The Ice₂O starts at \$1,999. For purchasing information visit Maytag.com.



When Opportunity Knocks ...

After 18 years as a social worker, Wendy was burned out and wanted a break. "I needed a new career, but I didn't want to return to school, and I knew I didn't want to work nights or weekends." Wendy read about Personal Chefs on a web site. Her passion for food and the opportunity to be her own boss quickly became an exciting combination, and she enrolled with the Culinary Business Academy to get started.



After her specialized training, talking led to referrals. Referrals became interested, and soon "Memorable Meals" was open for business. For Wendy, being a Personal Chef is a perfect fit. "Being available for my family is very important to me." Wendy prepares a variety of comfort and ethnic foods, but she finds the greatest satisfaction in "the challenge of finding new ways to get kids to eat." Wendy now enjoys success one family at a time.

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test drive

Which KitchenAid attachment is right for you?

So you have the KitchenAid stand mixer—now what about all those interesting attachments you can buy separately? Are any of them worth the investment? To find out, we put several of the likeliest

attachments through their paces. They all were sturdy and easy to set up, break down, and clean, but we felt there were only a couple that we'd really love to own.



Pasta roller set

(includes a sheet roller for kneading and rolling the dough, plus cutters for fettuccine and spaghetti): Pasta making is a breeze with this sturdy roller and cutter. The mixer's motor does the cranking for you, so you have both hands free to feed and catch the pasta sheets, whereas a manual pasta roller requires one hand to turn the crank. (\$129.99 at Shopkitchenaid.com)



Ice cream maker

Tuck the bowl into the freezer overnight, and this easy-to-use ice cream maker is ready to go. The frozen double-walled bowl stays cold for about 20 minutes of mixing, at which point you'll have a soft, airy ice cream ready to be transferred to the freezer for 3 to 5 hours to harden. We liked that the bowl could hold 2 quarts but also works for smaller batches. If you don't have space for a stand-alone ice cream machine, this attachment could be just the thing. (\$99.99 at Shopkitchenaid.com)

Food grinder set

(includes fine and coarse grinding plates and stomper): We like how it grinds meats for sausage, meatloaf, and burgers (very cold or nearly frozen meats work best) but don't like the way the grinder heats up as it operates. We had to take breaks or grind small batches to avoid warming the meat. (\$64.99 at Shopkitchenaid.com)

If you grind large batches of meat, the food tray below is convenient but not essential. (\$24.99 at Shopkitchenaid.com)



Can opener

This attachment opens cans perfectly well, but we found it awkward to use because you first have to lock the can in place and then switch on the stand mixer's motor. And cans with wet contents (soup, tuna) tended to spill, which was especially messy because the cans were suspended 6 to 8 inches above the counter. (\$49.99 at Shopkitchenaid.com)

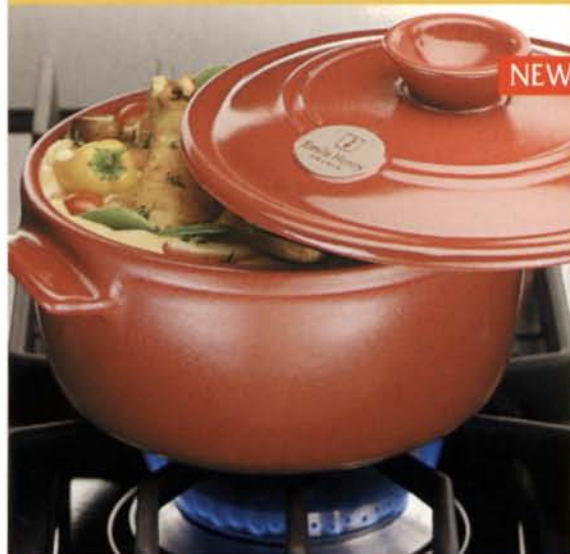
—Molly Stevens, contributing editor



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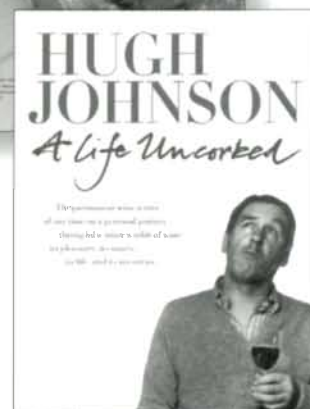
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—Eric Asimov, *New York Times*

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Top
picks

DeLonghi Brushed Aluminum Toaster

(model DTT900)

\$129.95 at Cooking.com

Even browning: excellent

Range of browning: excellent

Features: cancel button, warming rack, extra-wide self-centering slots, removable crumb tray

This is one impressive toaster: It automatically lowers bread, and a soft bell rings when the toast is done. Toast rises well above the slots, so no high-lift feature is needed. The lowest setting can reheat toast without further browning. A warming rack that can be set on top of the toaster is the one feature that failed to impress.

How we tested

We tested 11 of the newest two-slice toasters on the market. Each cost no more than \$150 and had at least two “extra” features, such as a bagel mode or a cancel button. After breaking in the toasters (see the Tip at right), we evaluated each model by toasting one slice at a time at each browning setting and then toasting two slices together at each setting to evaluate toasting range and evenness of browning. We also toasted two slices four times in a row to assess heat buildup. To evaluate the toasters’ versatility, we toasted bagels, English muffins, and thickly sliced artisan bread and tested extra features.

The other toasters in our review included (in alphabetical order): Black & Decker Toast-It-All Plus T123, Cuisinart CPT-160, Hamilton Beach Classic Chrome, Krups FEM3, T-Fal Avanté, and Toastmaster Vintage Platinum Toaster TMT2.

review:

Today's Top Toasters

BY MARYELLEN DRISCOLL



KitchenAid

(KMTT200)

\$89.99 at Kitchenaid.com, starting in May

Even browning: excellent

Range of browning: excellent

Features: bagel and reheat modes, extra-wide self-centering slots, removable crumb tray, stay-cool sides, extra-lift lever

When toasting just one slice, most toasters brown one side more than the other because heat radiates from the empty neighboring slot. KitchenAid's newest model was the only double-slotted toaster in our tests that didn't do this. Ironically, with two slices you get one side that comes out a little lighter than the other.

Tip: Break in your toaster

Most new toasters need to be used a half dozen times or more for the heat elements to adjust and work properly.

Toasters just keep getting savvier. These days, many models can toast bagels on the cut side only, reheat toast without further browning, defrost bread, or cancel at the touch of a button. Nice as these extras may be, they're not what makes a toaster a keeper. What matters most is how well a toaster can toast. After testing 11 of the more cutting-edge models on the market, we found that the best ones were those that could consistently toast bread just the way you like it—whether pale or nearly burnt—in just one cycle.

In our tests, the toasters that met this standard had a full browning spectrum: At the lowest setting, a slice of white bread came out pale

yet crisp and warm. At the highest setting, it came out burnt. And in between was that ideal golden slice. If a toaster can't deliver this range of browning intensities, it'll have trouble handling different kinds of breads (heat that nearly burns plain white bread is just what a moist English muffin or a dense slice of sourdough needs), and you'll get stuck toasting your bread for two cycles—or worse, one and a half—and hovering over it to make sure it doesn't burn. Now, that's no way to start a morning.

Nearly all of the toasters in our tests had their merits, but after toasting loaf after loaf of bread, the five machines shown below stood out as our favorites.

Worthwhile extras

Groovy extra features can make a great toaster even better.

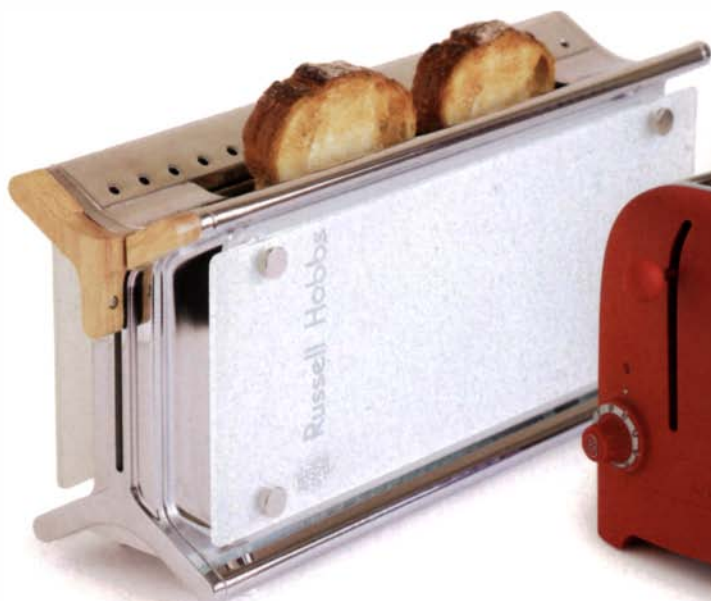
Reheat mode – This feature warms (dry) toast without continuing to brown the exterior or dry out the interior.

Bagel mode – In the best toasters, this setting toasts only the sliced side of the bagel while warming its rounded exterior.

Extra lift – The toaster's lever raises up to lift small items like English muffins out of the hot slots.

Self-centering slots – Vertical wire racks in the slots adjust to bread's thickness so it doesn't tilt and toast unevenly.

Runners-up



Russell Hobbs Glass Toaster

(model RHG2T)

\$92.86 at Kitchendirect.com

Even browning: very good

Range of browning: very good

Features: bagel mode, cancel button, extra-wide self-centering slot, removable crumb tray, stay-cool sides, extra-lift lever

There's much to love about this toaster: above all, the single long slot that can fit oblong slices from an artisan loaf. The lowest setting can reheat toast without further browning. The tinted glass panels on the sides of the toaster stay cool, but the protruding chrome top gets quite hot.



Dualit Lite

\$79.95 at Bakerscatalogue.com

Even browning: good

Range of browning: very good

Features: bagel mode, extra-lift lever, removable crumb tray

Dualit recently introduced this relatively affordable model—not to be confused with the high-end Dualit Vario. It's pretty no-nonsense and does a great job toasting just about any kind of bread. Our main quibble is that when you toast a single slice it's noticeably darker on one side than on the other. You can use the lowest setting to reheat toast.



Oster Counterforms

\$39.99 at Oster.com, starting in April

Even browning: good

Range of browning: very good

Features: defrost, reheat, bagel, waffle, and pastry modes; extra-lift lever; cancel button; extra-wide self-centering slots; pullout crumb tray; stay-cool sides

This model toasts well at an affordable price. It handles two slices better than single slices (which come out somewhat uneven). The high-lift lever locks into place, so it's easy to remove English muffins without burning your fingers. ♦

The votes have been counted and the winners are...

main
dish



Classic American Pot Roast

This all-time favorite, featured in issue #74 (October/November 2005), was the hands-down winner in the main dish category.

side
dish

my favorite Fine Cooking recipe

Thanks to all of you who voted for your favorite *Fine Cooking* recipes (in case you missed them, the winning recipes can be found online at www.FineCooking.com).

And our congratulations to the 24 winners who came away with terrific prizes from our advertisers.

This event was a great opportunity for us to hear from you, which we enjoy, because we want *Fine Cooking* to be about the food *you* want to make!



Oven Fries

Featured in issue #71 (April/May 2005), this was the winning side dish and the top vote-getter in both categories.

Thanks to our advertisers who donated valuable prizes!

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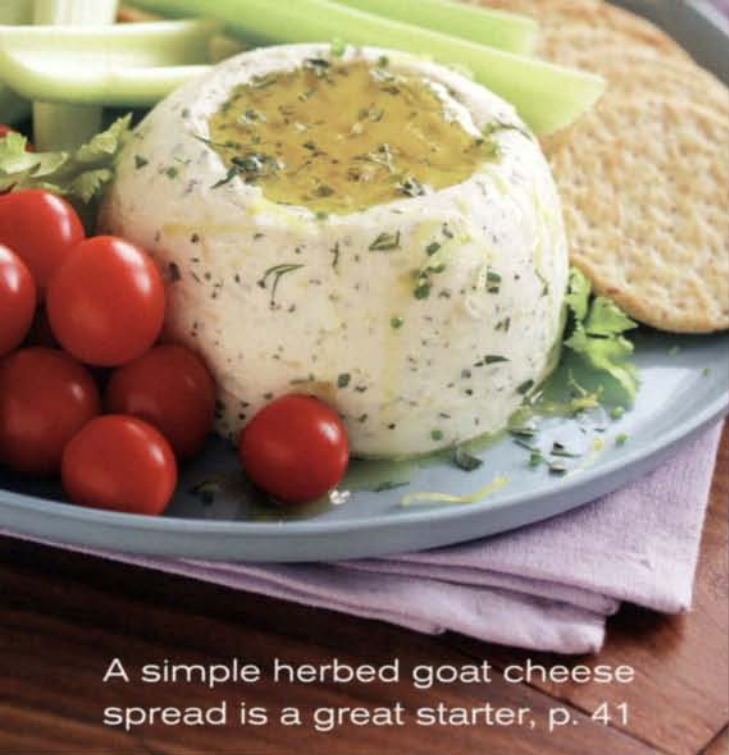
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A simple herbed goat cheese spread is a great starter, p. 41



Spring Fling

Relax...this fresh, flavorful menu is practically stress-free

BY MARTHA HOLMBERG

It's funny how good we can become at deceiving ourselves about the reality of our lives. For as long as I can remember, I've been telling myself that my frenetic, over-scheduled, teetering-on-the-verge-of-complete-chaos daily life was just a temporary state and that as soon as I got past "this busy patch," my life would slow down. I'd have time to take a deep breath, smooth out the wrinkles of our domestic life, and catch up. I'd have time to entertain, complete with flowers, candles, and precisely orchestrated multiple courses. Place cards, anyone?

But I've just turned 50 (how did *that* happen?) and I'm through with self-delusion. It's time to face the reality that life at our house is never going to slow down.

Happily, though, as far as entertaining goes, that doesn't require compromising (but I do have to let go of the place card idea). You don't need a lot of time to pull together a satisfying evening of friends, family, and great food—you just need to relax.

The menu I'm proposing here is very relaxed—no individual appetizers, a main dish that's all in one bowl—and it's full of the fresh spring flavors that we're all craving about now, yet it still has some substance to counteract any lingering chill of winter.

menu

Serves six



Goat Cheese Spread
with Herbs & Olive Oil



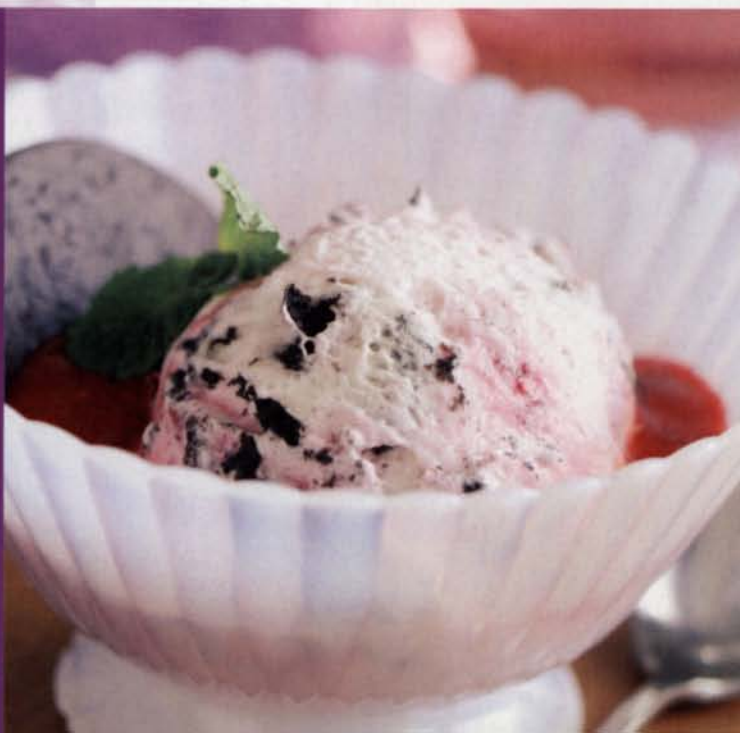
Garlic-Parmesan
Bread



Salad of Roast
Chicken & Spring
Vegetables with
Lemony Dressing



Chocolate-Raspberry
Cookies & Cream



timeline

To start, I'm suggesting an easy-to-make spread of goat cheese with lots of fresh herbs, lemon zest, olive oil, and a dash of white wine for tang. Your friends just want to hang out in the kitchen with you anyway, so set a platter of this cheese on the counter along with good crackers and lots of crunchy raw vegetables. The cheese spread can be made a couple of days ahead or at the last minute.

Next, a main-dish salad of greens, herbs, and roasted chicken. For the main dish, serve a salad of fresh greens and herbs cradling succulent slices of roasted chicken breast, carrots, and asparagus. The only part of this dish that requires fussing is the dressing, which is a savory-citrusy mix of lemon and some of the chicken pan drippings. The chicken and vegetables should be served slightly warm but not hot, so there's no rush to the table with this dish. Pair a warm, crusty loaf of garlic-Parmesan bread with the salad, and dinner is served.

Dessert for us is often a piece of fruit or a bar of dark chocolate broken into glossy shards, which is just fine if that's what your schedule allows. But here's a fun and delicious dessert that's so dead-easy it'll take you only a few minutes to pull off. It's a riff on the Famous Chocolate Wafer Refrigerator Roll (the undisputed favorite at my house growing up), with the addition of raspberries (frozen are perfect) and the subtraction of the need to spread and stack all those cookies. In my version, you just crunch up the cookies and fold them into raspberry-swirled whipped cream. To serve, you scoop out spoonfuls as you would with a mousse.

If you have a couple of hours before your friends are coming over, you can easily concoct this entire menu. But if you plan ahead a bit, you can get the first course and dessert finished a day ahead, leaving just the salad to make before—or as—your guests arrive. And that's a reality anyone can face, relaxed and refreshed.



With a little do-ahead prep, a relaxing menu gets even easier

This timeline breaks each recipe down into its make-ahead components, but don't worry if you can't get to all of them ahead of time. You could actually make everything (except the dessert, which benefits from an overnight chill) in the couple of hours before your guests arrive.

The day before

Shop for all groceries; put white wine in fridge.

Make cheese spread. Wash tomatoes. Wash and trim celery and refrigerate in an airtight container.

Make butter-Parmesan mixture for garlic bread; refrigerate.

Lightly toast pine nuts for salad.

Shave Parmigiano Reggiano and prepare fennel for salad. Zest and juice lemon for dressing.

Remove chicken and vegetables from oven when done; let chicken rest in a warm place. Increase oven temperature to 425°F.

As guests arrive

Pour wine or other drinks (see sidebar, p. 42).

Unmold cheese spread onto a platter. Garnish with oil and reserved zest and herbs. Arrange vegetables around the cheese, and set out for everyone to serve themselves.

Put garlic bread in oven.

The night before

Make the cookie-and-cream dessert; refrigerate.

A couple of hours ahead

Prep chicken, asparagus, and carrots, and put them in their own baking dishes.

Remove butter-Parmesan mixture from fridge to soften. Butter bread and wrap in foil.

Wash greens and herbs for salad.

An hour before guests arrive

Heat oven. Roast chicken. After 10 or 15 minutes, start roasting asparagus and carrots also.

As guests nibble the appetizer

Make the lemony dressing. Toss salad greens with oil and lemon juice, and compose the individual salads. Dress salads, garnish, and serve, along with garlic bread.

After the salad

Break away from the table to start the coffee or tea. Scoop cookies and cream into individual bowls, decorate with a whole chocolate wafer and drizzle on raspberry sauce. Serve.

Goat Cheese Spread with Herbs & Olive Oil

Yields about 1 1/4 cups; serves six.

8 ounces goat cheese (about 1 cup)
2 tablespoons heavy cream, more if needed
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, more for drizzling
2 tablespoons dry white wine
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons chopped fresh herbs (choose at least two from the following: parsley, chives, tarragon, dill)
1 tablespoon finely grated lemon zest
Good crackers or slices of walnut bread
About 1 pint cherry tomatoes
1 celery heart, cut into sticks

Put the goat cheese, cream, olive oil, and wine in a food processor (or mix in a bowl with a wooden spoon). Pulse just to blend. The mixture should be spreadable; if it's too thick, add 1 or 2 tablespoons more cream

and pulse again. Season with salt and pepper, pulse again, and taste, adjusting the seasoning as necessary. Reserve 1 teaspoon of the herbs for sprinkling, and add the rest to the processor. Add 2 teaspoons of the lemon zest. Pulse once more to blend.

Line a small (about 1 1/2 cup) round bowl or cup with a sheet of plastic wrap and fill with the cheese mixture. Cover and chill for at least 30 minutes and up to 24 hours.

To serve, invert the bowl onto a serving platter and peel off the plastic. With the back of a spoon, level off the top of the cheese and make a small depression. Drizzle olive oil over the top. Sprinkle with the reserved herbs and lemon zest. Arrange the crackers or bread slices, tomatoes, and celery around the cheese and let guests serve themselves.



Salad of Roast Chicken & Spring Vegetables with Lemony Dressing

Serves six.

6 medium bone-in, skin-on chicken breast halves
About 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves
1 pound asparagus, woody ends trimmed
1 pound trimmed baby carrots (or larger carrots, peeled, halved crosswise, and thick halves split lengthwise)
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice, more if needed
1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
1/4 teaspoon Dijon mustard
6 cups salad greens (I like using bibb lettuce torn into pieces with some sliced radicchio added for color)

1 medium fennel bulb, trimmed, cut in half lengthwise, cored, and sliced crosswise as finely as possible
1/2 cup fresh flat parsley leaves
1/2 cup fresh mint leaves (torn into bite-size pieces if large)
1/3 cup pine nuts, lightly toasted
Thin shavings Parmigiano Reggiano (use a vegetable peeler)

Position racks in the top and bottom thirds of the oven. Heat the oven to 400°F.

Arrange the chicken in a shallow, flameproof roasting pan, rub each breast with olive oil, and season both sides generously with salt and pepper. Sprinkle the thyme on top of the chicken breasts. Roast skin-side up in the

oven on the upper rack until the juices run clear (an instant-read thermometer should register 165°F), 35 to 45 minutes.

Meanwhile, put the asparagus in a medium baking dish (9x13-inch, or one in which they'll fit in a single, uncrowded layer). Drizzle on enough olive oil to coat, season with salt and pepper, and toss. Arrange in a single layer. In a separate dish, do the same with the carrots. Roast the vegetables on the lower rack along with the chicken until they're tender, 12 to 16 minutes for the asparagus and 20 to 30 minutes for the carrots. The carrots can be roasted very deeply, but take care not to over-roast the asparagus or they'll turn mushy. When the vegetables are done, set them aside.

Make the dressing: When the chicken is done, transfer the breasts to a platter and tent with foil. Pour any juices and fat from the roasting pan into a small bowl (don't worry if there isn't much). Put the roasting pan on a burner over medium heat. Add 3 tablespoons of the lemon juice to the pan and, using a wooden spoon or spatula, quickly scrape up all the browned juices, dissolving them in the lemon. Pour this into the bowl with the cooking juices. Once the chicken has rested for about 10 minutes, un-

cover and add any accumulated juices to the bowl. Whisk in the lemon zest, mustard, and enough olive oil to balance the acidity of the lemon juice. Season to taste with salt and pepper. You should have about 1/2 cup dressing.

When the chicken is cool enough to handle but still quite warm, slide your fingers between the meat and the bones and pull the meat and skin away in one piece (the tenderloin may come off in a separate piece). Cut each breast (and tenderloin) into about 6 slices on the diagonal, keeping them intact so you can fan them out on the salad later.

Put the greens, fennel, and fresh herb sprigs into a large bowl. Toss with the remaining 1 tablespoon of lemon juice and about 2 tablespoons of olive oil, adding more if needed to lightly coat the salad. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

On six large plates or in six large shallow bowls, arrange a bed of the greens. On each plate lay a fan of chicken meat on one side, a few spears of asparagus on another side, and some carrots on another. Drizzle about a tablespoon of the dressing over the meat and vegetables. Sprinkle with the pine nuts and top with a few Parmigiano shavings. Serve immediately.



Garlic-Parmesan Bread

Serves six.

8 tablespoons (½ cup) salted butter, softened
¼ cup lightly packed finely grated Parmigiano Reggiano
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
2 large cloves garlic, very finely minced or grated on a rasp-style grater
1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 medium loaf artisan-style bread with a tight crumb (I like wide bâtard shapes, not baguettes)

Heat the oven to 425°F.

In a food processor or a large bowl, combine the butter, Parmigiano, oil, gar-

lic, lemon zest, ¼ teaspoon salt, and ⅛ teaspoon pepper. Pulse a few times to blend but don't overprocess or the butter might separate. If mixing by hand, mash together with a fork or a wooden spoon.

Slice the bread 1-inch thick, cutting almost but not all the way through the bottom crust, so it's easy to pull apart. Spread a light, even coating of the butter mixture on both sides of each slice of bread. (You may not need all the butter; refrigerate any leftover for up to a week or freeze for up to three months.) Wrap the bread in foil and put the loaf on a baking sheet to catch any butter that runs out. Heat in the oven for about 15 minutes, then open the top of the foil to slightly crisp the top of the loaf, about 5 more minutes. Serve while hot.



Chocolate-Raspberry Cookies & Cream

Yields 2½ cups cream and ¾ cup sauce; serves six.

I like to make this with both crème fraîche and heavy cream, but you can use all cream if that's easier.

3 cups frozen raspberries (about 12 ounces), thawed
5 tablespoons granulated sugar, more if needed
Few drops fresh lemon juice
Kosher salt
¾ cup heavy cream
⅓ cup crème fraîche
21 Famous Chocolate Wafer thin chocolate cookies
6 cute mint sprigs

Put one cup of the raspberries in a small bowl, sprinkle with two tablespoons of the sugar, mash with a fork, and let sit a few minutes.

Meanwhile, put the remaining 2 cups of berries and 2 more tablespoons of sugar in a food processor (or blender) and process until the berries form a purée. Strain through a fine-mesh strainer into a small bowl, pressing with a rubber spatula to get the seeds out. Squeeze in a few drops of lemon juice and a tiny pinch of salt. Taste and add more sugar or lemon if needed.

The sauce should be thin enough to drizzle. If it seems too thick, add a few drops of water. Cover and refrigerate.

In a medium bowl, combine the cream, the crème fraîche, and the remaining 1 tablespoon sugar and whip with a hand mixer until the mixture forms firm, thick peaks. Stir the mashed berries and sugar and lightly fold into the cream mixture with a rubber spatula, leaving streaks.

Reserve 6 of the cookies for decoration and crunch up the rest into uneven pieces—not too small. Fold the cookies into the cream. Cover with plastic wrap, pressing the wrap onto the surface of the cream, and chill until the cookie pieces are thoroughly softened, at least 2 hours and preferably overnight.

To serve, use an ice cream scoop or large spoon to scoop out a mound of cookies and cream into a small bowl or onto a plate. Drizzle a ribbon of raspberry sauce around the plate, tuck a cookie into the cream, and decorate with a mint sprig.

wine choices

To pair with the Goat Cheese Spread, you'll want a bright, fruit-forward white with crisp acidity and no oak, like a Pinot Gris. Look for the 2004 WillaKenzie Estate (\$16) or the 2004 Elk Cove (\$16), both from Oregon. The appealing fruit and supple texture of Pinot Noir make it a perfect mate with the Salad of Roast Chicken and Spring Vegetables. Try the 2003 A to Z Pinot Noir from Oregon (\$17) or the 2004 Saintsburly Garnet (\$17) from the Carneros region of California.

—Contributing editor
Tim Gaiser is a master sommelier.

Martha Holmberg, the former publisher and editor-in-chief of Fine Cooking, is the food editor of The Oregonian newspaper in Portland. ♦

Osso Buco

BY PERLA MEYERS

a velvety-tender braise of veal

Veal shanks are popular in many European cuisines, but it's in osso buco, the northern Italian classic, that they can be at their most heavenly. Osso buco—veal shanks that have been browned and then slowly cooked in a sophisticated and subtle tomato sauce—has an undeserved reputation of requiring large amounts of both time and expertise in the kitchen. Like most braises, it does require slow, gentle cooking to become tender, and it does taste better when made a day ahead of serving, allowing its wonderful flavors time to settle and meld. But few dishes are more forgiving or more seductive. And the truth is, osso buco doesn't take much hands-on time, nor is the cooking difficult. It's simply a question of breaking down the steps.

Shop for 1¼-inch-thick shanks. Choosing thick veal shanks ensures that the meat will stay moist. You can go thicker if you want; just expect the braising time to be a bit longer.

Brown the shanks well. This is essential for succulent meat and a deeply flavored sauce. To get a nicely browned crust, don't crowd the pan. At the same time, you don't want too much room in the pan or it will get too hot, and the shanks could burn.

Braise the meat with tomatoes and in a moderate amount of flavorful liquid. This will yield the deep, rich sauce you're looking for. After an hour and a half or so in the oven, the meat will start to pull away from the bone. At this point, you can be pretty sure the meat is done. But to be certain, there's nothing like taking a little taste to confirm their velvety-tender texture.



Rich veal sauce and creamy saffron risotto (see p. 54) make a heavenly match.

Good technique ensures meltingly tender meat and a richly flavored sauce

1 Sear the shanks to a deep golden brown. It takes only a few minutes on each side, so don't rush them, and don't fiddle with them too much. You'll get the best crust if the shanks sit undisturbed as they're browning.

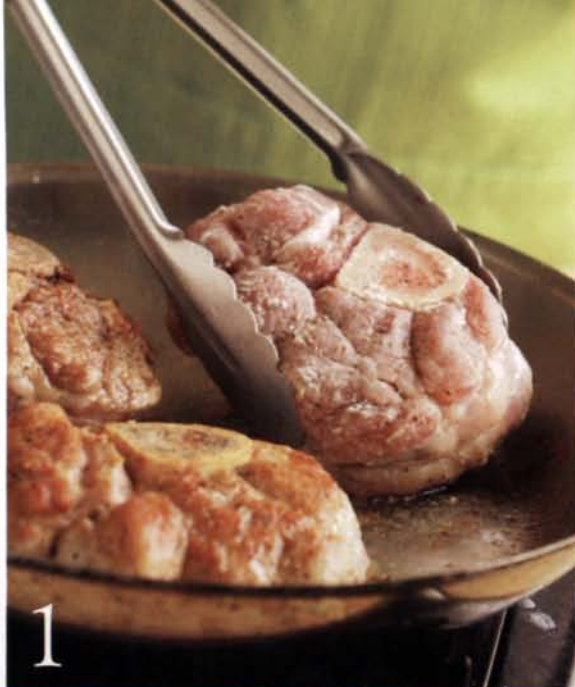
2 Use lots of canned tomatoes and a little tomato paste. The chopped canned tomatoes break down during cooking and give the sauce its backbone. A few spoonfuls of tomato paste add roundness and body to the sauce.

3 Cover tightly to trap moisture. Covering the roasting pan with foil ensures that the braising liquid gets taken up by the veal shanks rather than evaporating in the oven. Check on the shanks periodically during braising; the broth should remain about halfway up the shanks.

4 Aim for fork-tender shanks. You'll know the meat is done when it starts to pull away from the bone and from the string tied around the shanks. If in doubt, taste a piece to check that it's succulent and tender.

5 For a silky sauce, strain the solids but save those juices. Press hard with a spatula to extract all the juicy goodness from the vegetables that cooked with the shanks. Then discard the solids, which have given up their flavor to the sauce.

6 Finish with gremolata. This classic parsley, garlic, anchovy, and lemon zest mixture adds pizzazz to the sauce and also serves as a pretty final garnish for the shanks.



Osso Buco

Serves six.

This is the world's best make-ahead dish—it tastes amazing on the second day. The classic accompaniment is saffron risotto, which you can make following the risotto method in the article on p. 54.

6 1¼ inch-thick veal shanks
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
½ cup all-purpose flour for dredging
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
3 cups finely diced yellow onion (about 2 medium onions)
1 cup finely diced celery (about 2 stalks)
¾ cup finely diced carrot (about 2 small carrots)
1 teaspoon dried oregano
¾ cup dry white wine
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1 28-ounce can Italian plum tomatoes, drained and chopped, juices reserved
1 cup low-salt chicken broth, more if needed
1 large sprig thyme
1 bay leaf
1 tablespoon arrowroot mixed with 2 teaspoons broth or water (look for arrowroot in the spice section of your grocery store)

FOR THE GREMOLATA:

3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
2 large cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon finely grated lemon zest
2 anchovy fillets, minced

Heat the oven to 350°F.

Tie the veal shanks around the middle with kitchen string (if they're not tied already) and season them with salt and pepper. Put the flour in a dish. Dredge the shanks very lightly in flour, thoroughly shaking off the excess.

Have ready a roasting pan or baking dish large enough to hold the shanks in a single layer (9x13-inch works well). In a large heavy skillet, heat 3 tablespoons of the oil over medium-high heat. Put three veal shanks in the pan and sear until nicely browned on both sides, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Move the shanks to the roasting pan. Repeat with the remaining three shanks.

Carefully pour off the fat in the pan and wipe it out with paper towels (it's fine if the browned bits remain in the pan bottom; just wipe away the used oil). Return the pan to medium heat and add the butter and remaining 1 tablespoon of oil. When the butter is melted, add the onion, celery, carrot, oregano, and 1 teaspoon salt. Cook the vegetables, stirring occasionally, until soft and lightly browned, 15 to 20 minutes. Increase the heat to medium-high, add the wine, and

cook, scraping up any brown bits with a wooden spoon, until the wine is reduced to about ¼ cup, about 3 minutes.

Stir in the tomato paste. Add the tomatoes with their juices, the broth, thyme, bay leaf, ½ teaspoon salt, and a few grinds of pepper. Bring to a boil, and pour the contents of the pan over the shanks. Cover tightly with heavy-duty aluminum foil.

Braise the veal in the oven until fork-tender, 1½ to 2 hours, checking the liquid occasionally. If it has cooked down, add enough broth to keep the level about halfway up the shanks. To check for doneness, pierce a shank with a fork. The meat should pull apart easily. Taste a morsel—it should feel soft and tender. Do not overcook, or the veal will fall apart.

Gently brush most of the vegetable bits off the shanks. With a wide, flat metal spatula, carefully transfer the veal shanks to a dish. Strain the pan juices through a medium-mesh sieve into a saucepan, pressing hard on the solids with a spatula to extract as much sauce as you can. Bring the sauce to a simmer. Whisk in the arrowroot mixture and cook briefly to thicken. If you're working ahead, stop here and see "Make it ahead," below.

Make the gremolata. Just before finishing the sauce and serving, combine the parsley, garlic, lemon zest, and anchovies. Add two tablespoons of the gremolata to the sauce. Remove the strings from the shanks. Serve the osso buco topped with the sauce and a small sprinkling of the remaining gremolata.

To drink:

Osso Buco is a classic Italian dish and calls for an equally classic Italian red with forward fruit, bright acidity, and moderate tannins. Chianti Classico from Tuscany or Barbera from Piedmont are two excellent choices. Try the 2002 Felsina Chianti Classico (\$18) or the 2003 Michele Chiarlo Barbera d'Asti (\$14).



reader review

A *Fine Cooking* reader gave this recipe a real-world test. Here are the results:

"This is no ordinary veal dish. I made it ahead, so I was more relaxed, able to spend time with my guests, and had less to clean up after dinner. I served the osso buco with a mixed baby green salad with pomegranate vinaigrette, saffron risotto, and wine-poached pears for dessert. My daughters said the meal was sensational, which I thought was great because they're superior cooks."

—Carol Ciaffa,
Fairfield, Connecticut

Make it ahead

To make it ahead, braise the veal and strain and thicken the sauce with the arrowroot. Then wipe the roasting pan clean, return the shanks to the pan, and pour the sauce over the shanks. Let them cool at room temperature for an hour, cover well, and refrigerate for up to a day or two.

To reheat, cover the pan with foil and set in a 325°F oven until the shanks are hot, 30 to 35 minutes. Transfer the shanks to a dish, then make the gremolata, adding it to the sauce and sprinkling it over the shanks.

*Perla Meyers lives in New York. Her most recent book is *How to Peel a Peach and 1001 Other Things Every Good Cook Needs to Know*. ♦*

Vegetables, Perfectly Steamed & Deliciously Sauced

Lemony Brown-Butter Sauce with Chives

*Yields about 6 tablespoons,
enough for 1 to 1¼ pounds
steamed vegetables.*

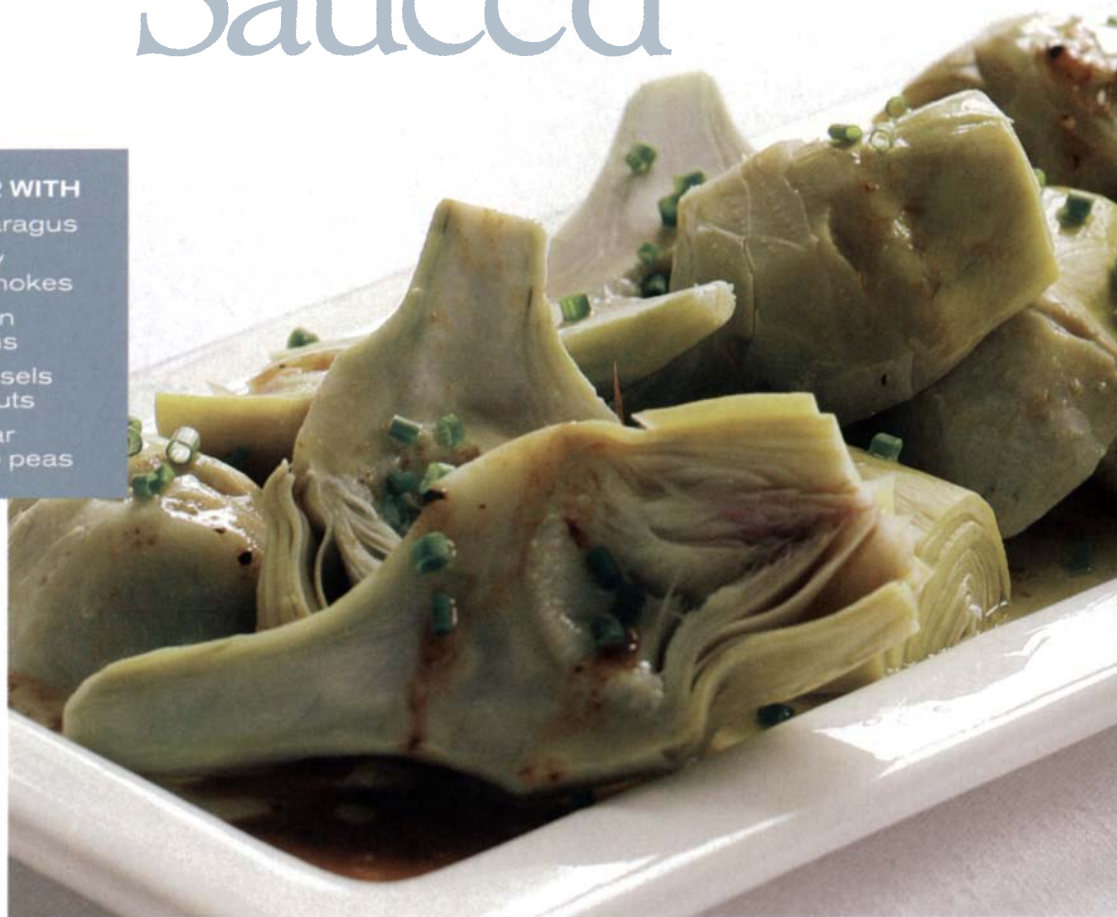
**4 tablespoons unsalted
butter**
**2 tablespoons fresh lemon
juice**
**Kosher salt and freshly
ground black pepper**
**2 tablespoons thinly sliced
chives**

In a small (1-quart) saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat. Cook the butter, whisking constantly, just until the milk solids turn a nutty brown color, 3 to 5 minutes. As soon as the butter is brown, take the pan off the heat and carefully pour in the lemon juice. Swirl to combine. Season with ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper, or to taste.

Drizzle the sauce over steamed vegetables and sprinkle with the chives.

PAIR WITH

Asparagus
Baby
artichokes
Green
beans
Brussels
sprouts
Sugar
snap peas



BY JENNIFER ARMENTROUT

Mention “steamed vegetables” and the first thing that pops into many people’s minds is bland, boring diet food. I couldn’t disagree more. Simple, yes. But boring? Definitely not. Steaming, one of the speediest cooking methods, is an excellent way to reveal the pure flavor of just about any vegetable. Cooked properly, steamed vegetables can stand on their own, but to really make them sing, I like to drizzle on a quick, complementary sauce.











As you’ll see in the sauces featured here, I rely on spices and acidic ingredients like lemon juice and vinegar for brightness and often add rich ingredients like cream, cheese, bacon, and tasty oils to give the vegetables a fuller flavor. Steamed vegetables, simply sauced—the results are anything but bland. Here are a few pointers to keep in mind as you steam:

Don’t overload the steamer. Arrange the vegetables in a loose, shallow layer so the steam can cook them evenly. *(continued on p. 48)*



Five easy sauces
dress up everything from
baby artichokes to
sugar snap peas

All the vegetables fit to steam (or at least many of them)

vegetable		how to prepare	steaming time
Artichokes, baby		See From our Test Kitchen, p. 72	5 to 6 minutes
Asparagus		Trim tough ends	4 to 6 minutes
Carrots		Peel and slice into 1/2-inch-thick rounds	6 to 8 minutes
Cauliflower		Core and cut into 1 inch florets	4 to 5 minutes
Broccoli crowns		Cut tops into 1-inch florets, slice stems 1/4 inch thick	3 to 4 minutes
Broccolini		Trim the ends	5 to 6 minutes
Brussels sprouts		Trim bottom and halve through the base	5 to 6 minutes
Green beans		Trim stem ends	3 to 5 minutes
Potatoes, baby or fingerling		Scrub and quarter (halve fingerlings lengthwise)	10 to 15 minutes
Sugar snap peas		Rinse and remove stem end and string	5 to 6 minutes

How to steam vegetables



Trim and cut your vegetable as directed in the chart above. Meanwhile, bring an inch or so of water to a boil over high heat in a pot fit with a steamer insert (see Equipment, p. 28, for options).



Put the vegetables in the steamer, sprinkle with kosher salt, cover tightly, and steam until just tender. The vegetables should be neither crisp nor soft but exactly in between. Bite into a piece to check.

Salt early. Sprinkling kosher salt on the vegetables right after they go into the steamer jump-starts the process of flavor release. You can salt later, too, but adding a little salt early on is a good practice.

Pay attention. The fatal flaw of many steamed vegetable dishes is improper doneness. They're too soft or too crisp, whereas ideally they should be neither mushy nor crunchy but perfectly tender. Hitting that sweet spot is easier said than done, I know, but it's only a matter of attention and timing. So don't wander far when the vegetables are in the steamer—the cooking happens quickly. To test for doneness, bite into a piece that you've quickly run under cold water (so you don't burn your tongue). Check the vegetables early so you don't miss their moment of perfection.

Tip: You can make the sauces an hour or so ahead; reheat if necessary before drizzling on the steamed vegetables.

Curry-Yogurt Sauce

Yields ½ cup, enough for 1 to 1½ pounds steamed vegetables.

½ cup plain yogurt, preferably whole milk
1 teaspoon cornstarch
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
½ cup minced yellow onion (about half a small onion)
Kosher salt
1 teaspoon minced garlic
1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger
½ teaspoon curry powder
¼ teaspoon ground cumin
Freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons coarsely chopped fresh cilantro for garnish (optional)

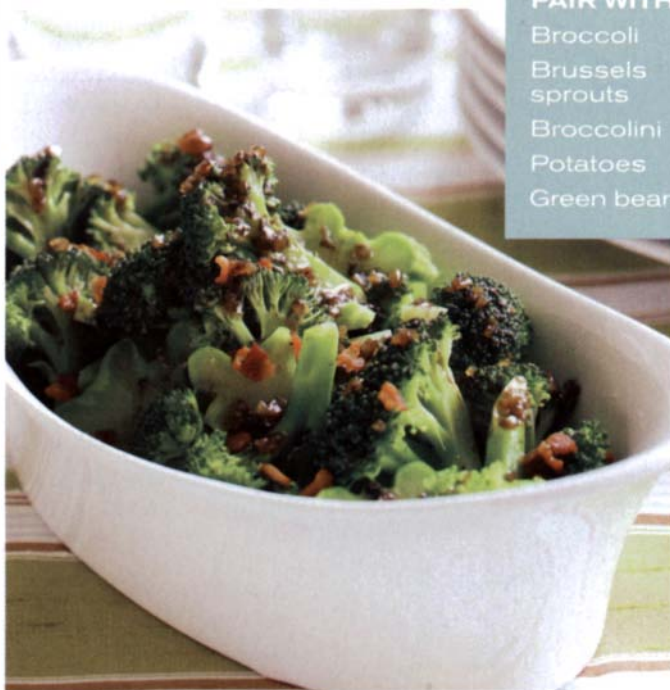
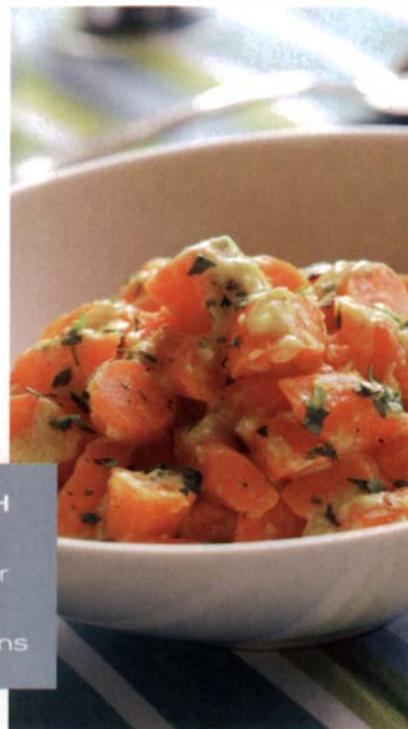
In a small bowl, stir together the yogurt and cornstarch until well blended.

In a small (1-quart) saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the onion, sprinkle with a pinch of salt, and cook, stirring frequently, until softened, 4 to 5 minutes. Add the

garlic and ginger and cook, stirring frequently, until just golden-brown, 4 to 5 minutes more (reduce the heat if the onion seems to be burning rather than browning). Add the curry powder and cumin and cook, stirring, 15 to 20 seconds. Reduce the heat to medium-low, add the yogurt mixture, and stir until slightly thickened, about 1 minute. Season with ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper, or to taste.

Drizzle the sauce over steamed vegetables and sprinkle with the cilantro, if using.

PAIR WITH
 Carrots
 Cauliflower
 Potatoes
 Green beans



PAIR WITH
 Broccoli
 Brussels sprouts
 Broccolini
 Potatoes
 Green beans

Balsamic-Bacon Vinaigrette Sauce

Yields about 6 tablespoons, enough for 1 to 1¼ pounds steamed vegetables.

2 slices bacon, cut into ¼-inch dice
1 small shallot, minced
1½ tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
¼ teaspoon Dijon mustard
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

In a small (1-quart) saucepan over medium heat, cook the bacon, stirring occasionally, until crisp and golden, about 5 minutes. With a slotted spoon, transfer the bacon to a dish lined with paper towels, leaving the bacon fat in the pan. Add the

shallot to the bacon fat and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 1 to 2 minutes. Add 1 tablespoon of the vinegar and scrape the bottom of the pan with a spoon to dissolve the browned bits stuck to the pan bottom. Off the heat, stir in the remaining ½ tablespoon vinegar, the lemon juice, and the mustard. Gradually whisk in the olive oil (don't worry if the sauce doesn't emulsify). Season with ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper, or to taste.

Drizzle the sauce over steamed vegetables and sprinkle with the cooked bacon bits.

Peppercorn-Parmesan Cream Sauce

Yields about 1/2 cup, enough for 1 to 1 1/2 pounds steamed vegetables.

Since this is basically a peppery Alfredo sauce, it's also good on pasta. The flavor depends on the cheese and the pepper, so be sure to use real, freshly grated Parmigiano and freshly ground black pepper.

1/4 cup heavy cream
1/4 cup whole milk
1 large egg yolk
1/4 cup freshly and finely grated Parmigiano Reggiano
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon coarsely grated Parmigiano Reggiano for garnish (optional)

In a small (1-quart) saucepan, combine the cream, milk, and egg yolk. Whisk

to blend thoroughly.

Place the saucepan over medium-low heat and cook, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until the sauce is hot and steamy and thickens slightly, 3 to 5 minutes. Don't let the sauce bubble at all or it may become a little lumpy. Remove from the heat and immediately add the 1/4 cup finely grated Parmigiano. Stir until the cheese is mostly melted. Season with 1/4 teaspoon salt and 3/8 teaspoon pepper, or to taste.

Drizzle the sauce over steamed vegetables and sprinkle with the coarsely grated cheese, if using.

PAIR WITH
Broccolini
Broccoli
Carrots
Cauliflower
Brussels sprouts



These sauces add flair to steamed vegetables, and they also work great on pasta, meat, and fish.

Lemony Tahini Sauce

Yields about 6 tablespoons, enough for 1 to 1 1/4 pounds steamed vegetables.

Look for tahini in cans or jars on supermarket shelves near the peanut butter or in the ethnic or natural foods section.

1 medium clove garlic
Kosher salt
3 tablespoons tahini (ground sesame seed paste)
3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
Pinch ground cumin
2 teaspoons toasted sesame seeds for garnish (optional)

Peel the garlic clove and chop it finely. Sprinkle the chopped garlic with a pinch of salt and then use the flat side of your knife to repeatedly scrape the

garlic against the cutting board, mashing it into a paste. Transfer the garlic paste to a small bowl and add the tahini. Whisk to blend. Gradually whisk in the lemon juice; at first the tahini will thicken, but as you add more and more lemon juice it will begin to loosen. Once all of the lemon juice is added, whisk in water 1/2 tablespoon at a time until you reach the consistency of a creamy sauce. Stir in the cumin and more salt to taste.

Drizzle the sauce over steamed vegetables and sprinkle with the sesame seeds, if using.

Jennifer Armentrout is Fine Cooking's test kitchen manager and recipe editor. ♦

PAIR WITH
Green beans
Potatoes
Carrots
Broccoli
Cauliflower



Any Way You Slice It, You'll Love

Slice it into medallions, cut it into steaks, or butterfly it—then pair each cut with the cooking method that suits it best

BY TONY ROSENFELD

Pork tenderloin is perfect for weeknight cooking—it's not expensive, it's easy to find at the market, and it's quick to cook, even when you leave it whole. It has a mild flavor that partners well with many ingredients, and best of all, it's boneless, which makes it wonderfully versatile; you can cut it however you please. I make pork tenderloin more interesting by slicing it into different cuts, like thick steaks or thin medallions, or even by butterflying it. Then I cook each of these cuts using a method that complements it, add some bright flavors, and I have a simple weeknight meal that feels a little fancy.

There's not much to cutting pork tenderloin—just use a sharp knife and cut the pork against the grain into even pieces—but there are a few important tricks to buying it. Look for all-natural tenderloins, which, I think, have the best flavor and texture. Avoid pork that has been injected with additives, which can give the meat an unpleasant, rubbery texture. Examine the label carefully to determine if anything has been added—the big print might say only “Always tender” or “Guaranteed tender.” Also, I try to use larger tenderloins (1 to 1¼ pounds), which tend to cook more gently and evenly than smaller ones; a larger tenderloin also yields fuller medallions for sautéing and often a more evenly shaped piece of meat for roasting whole.



Pork Tenderloin



Spinach & Mushroom-Stuffed Pork Tenderloin with Sherry Cream Sauce

Serves four.

5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
3½ ounces shiitake mushrooms, stemmed and thinly sliced (1½ cups)
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
6 ounces baby spinach (5 lightly packed cups)
1 large pork tenderloin (about 1¼ pounds)
1 tablespoon lightly chopped fresh thyme leaves
¼ cup freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano
2 large shallots, finely diced (½ cup)
¾ cup low-salt canned chicken broth
2½ tablespoons sherry vinegar
2 tablespoons heavy cream

Set a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F. Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a heavy, ovenproof 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering hot. Add the mushrooms, sprinkle with ½ teaspoon each of salt and pepper, and cook, stirring, until browned and tender, about 3 minutes. Stir in the spinach, sprinkle with salt, and cook, tossing well with tongs, until just wilted, about 2 minutes. Transfer the spinach mixture to a colander and set the skillet aside.

Trim the pork of any silverskin or excess fat. Butterfly the tenderloin by making a horizontal slice lengthwise through the tenderloin almost all the way to the other side. Open the meat flat, like a book. Cover with plastic wrap, and using a meat mallet, a small, heavy skillet, or the heel of your hand, lightly pound the pork so that it's ¼ inch thick. Rub the pork all over with 1 tablespoon of the oil, half of the thyme, and about ½ teaspoon each of salt and pepper. Squeeze any excess liquid from the spinach and mushrooms. Spread over the pork, leaving bare a 2-inch border along one long edge. Sprinkle on the Parmigiano. Starting with the long side that's covered with filling, roll the stuffed tenderloin toward the bare-border side so that it forms a cylinder, and secure it with four or five toothpicks or kitchen twine.

Wipe the skillet clean if necessary. Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons oil in the skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering hot. Sear the pork on all three non-seam sides until well browned, about 6 minutes total. Flip onto the seam side, then transfer the skillet to the oven. Cook until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the roast registers 140°F, 10 to 15 minutes.

Transfer the meat to a clean cutting board, tent with aluminum foil, and let rest for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, return the skillet to the stove over medium-high heat (be careful; the skillet's handle will be hot). Add the shallots, season with ¼ teaspoon salt, and cook, stirring, until the shallots soften and brown, about 2 minutes. Add the chicken broth, sherry vinegar, and the remaining 1½ teaspoons thyme, and simmer briskly until the mixture reduces by a bit more than half, about 4 minutes. Stir in the cream and season with salt and pepper to taste.

Slice the pork into ½-inch-thick slices (a serrated blade works well) and serve with the sauce.



Butterflied

By butterflying, I mean slicing the tenderloin almost all the way through lengthwise; you can then open the tenderloin like a book and stuff it with flavorful ingredients. For speed and ease, I like to roast stuffed tenderloin, which ensures that it cooks evenly.

wine choices

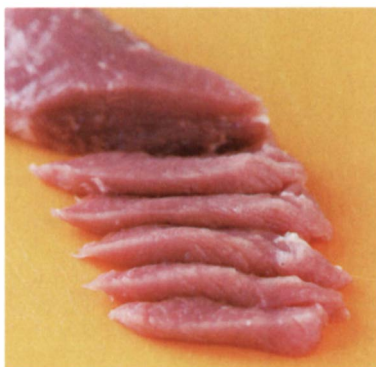
The robust, earthy flavors of a Grenache blend from southern France would be delicious with the **Spinach & Mushroom-Stuffed Pork Tenderloin**.

Look for the 2003 Guigal Côtes du Rhone (\$12) or the 2003 Paul Jaboulet Côtes du Rhone Parallel 45 (\$12).

The **Spicy Korean-Style Pork Medallions with Asian Slaw** calls for a lush, fruity red without a lot of tannin. Australian shiraz is a good match. Try the 2003 Penfolds Thomas Hyland (\$15) and the 2003 Peter Lehmann Barossa (\$17).

An intensely fruity red with spicy notes like Zinfandel would work well with the **Grilled Spice-Rubbed Pork Tenderloin with Honey-Chipotle Barbecue Sauce**. Try the 2004 Seghesio Sonoma (\$20) or the Ridge Vineyards Three Valleys (\$20).

—Tim Gaiser is a master sommelier.



Medallions

These thin rounds cook quickly, so I find that they're best sautéed on the stovetop, which allows you to control the heat and avoid overcooking the lean, tender meat.



Spicy Korean-Style Pork Medallions with Asian Slaw

Serves four to six.

- 1 large or 2 small pork tenderloins (about 1¼ pounds)**
- ⅓ cup soy sauce**
- ¼ cup rice vinegar**
- 3 tablespoons light brown sugar**
- 2 medium cloves garlic, minced**
- 1½ tablespoons minced fresh ginger**
- 1 tablespoon Asian sesame oil**
- 1 tablespoon Asian chile sauce (like Sriracha)**
- 1 pound napa cabbage, thinly sliced (about 6 cups)**
- 1 cup grated carrot (about 2 medium carrots)**
- 4 scallions (both white and green parts), trimmed and thinly sliced**
- 5 tablespoons canola or peanut oil**
- Kosher salt**

Trim the pork of any silverskin and excess fat, and cut on the diagonal into ½-inch-thick medallions.

In a small measuring cup, whisk together the soy sauce, 2 tablespoons of the rice vinegar, 2 tablespoons of the brown sugar, the garlic, ginger, ½ tablespoon of the sesame oil, and 2 teaspoons of the chile sauce. Toss ½ cup of this mixture with the pork medallions in a large bowl; reserve the remaining mixture to use as a sauce. Let the pork sit at room temperature for 25 minutes or refrigerate for up to 2 hours.

Meanwhile, in another large bowl, toss the cabbage and the carrot with half of the scallions, 1 tablespoon of the canola oil, 1 teaspoon salt, and the remaining 2 tablespoons rice vinegar, 1 tablespoon brown sugar, ½ tablespoon sesame oil, and 1 teaspoon chile sauce. Let sit for 15 minutes, toss again, and transfer to a large serving platter.

Heat 2 tablespoons of the canola oil in a 12-inch, heavy-based skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering hot. Remove the pork from the marinade, shaking off the excess, and transfer the pork to a clean plate. Discard the marinade. Add half of the pork medallions to the skillet, spacing them evenly. Cook them without touching until well browned, about 2 minutes. Flip and cook until the pork is just cooked through (slice into a piece to check), about 2 more minutes. Set the pork on top of the slaw. Pour out the oil and wipe the pan with paper towels (if the drippings on the bottom of the pan look like they may burn, wash the pan). Return the pan to medium-high heat. Add the remaining 2 tablespoons canola oil, and cook the remaining medallions in the same manner. Top the slaw with the remaining pork, and pour the reserved soy-ginger sauce over the medallions. Serve immediately, sprinkled with the remaining scallions.

Grilled Spice-Rubbed Pork Tenderloin Steaks with Honey-Chipotle Barbecue Sauce

Serves four to six.

- 2 large pork tenderloins (2 to 2½ pounds total)
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons light brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup honey
- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 chipotle, minced, plus 2 tablespoons adobo sauce (from a can of chipotles in adobo sauce)
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

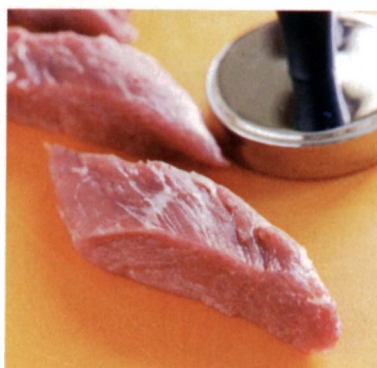
Trim the pork of any silverskin and excess fat, and cut each tenderloin on the diagonal into four pieces about 2 inches thick. Turn the pieces so that they're lying on a cut side, and using a meat mallet, a small heavy skillet, or the heel of your hand, lightly pound the steaks so they're about ½ inch thick.

In a small bowl, mix the chili powder, cumin, brown sugar, garlic powder, 2 teaspoons salt, and 1 teaspoon black pepper. Rub this spice mixture all over the pork and let it sit for at least 15 minutes at room temperature or refrigerate for up to 2 hours.

Heat a gas grill to medium-high or prepare a medium charcoal fire. When the grill is ready, cook the pork, covered, until it forms nice grill marks, about 3 minutes. Flip and continue cooking until just firm to the touch but still a little pink in the center (an instant-read thermometer inserted into the center of each steak should register 140°F), 3 to 4 more minutes.

Transfer the pork to a large serving platter and let rest, tented with aluminum foil. Meanwhile, stir together the honey, vinegar, tomato paste, chipotle and adobo sauce, and mustard, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Spoon the sauce over the pork.

Serving suggestion: These steaks are delicious with roasted sweet potato wedges seasoned with salt, pepper, and a little chili powder.



Steaks

Pounded flat, these are perfect for grilling, sort of like a tender version of a chop. The steaks are meaty enough that they won't cook through too quickly, allowing them to absorb some of the smoky flavor of the grill.

To pound or not to pound?

I pound the whole, butterflied tenderloin on p. 51 to lengthen it, giving me more surface area to top with stuffing. Pounding also helps thin the pork tenderloin steaks on this page so they cook more quickly and avoid drying out. (You won't need to pound pork medallions, though, because they're already thin enough to cook through quickly.) I like to use a heavy pounder with a straight up-and-down handle (see *Where to Buy It*, p. 80), but you can also use the heel of your hand or a small, heavy skillet.

Tony Rosenfeld is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking. ♦

How to Make the

Learn this easy method, then make it your own with the ingredients you love

BY LIDIA MATTICCHIO BASTIANICH

When I was a child, we had risotto every week, and it's still one of my favorite things to make for family meals. It's one of those dishes that can be either simple—made with only a few ingredients right out of the pantry—or a feast unto itself. But we've all had our share of less-than-perfect, overcooked risottos. I like to say that either you make it right or it's not risotto. To make one that's rich and creamy, you just have to follow the step-by-step method starting on p. 56. As you cook, you'll be mastering the basic technique and improvising your own flavor variations at the same time—without depending on a specific recipe.

Focus on a few critical steps

The key to perfectly cooked risotto is in drawing out the starches stored in the rice kernels a bit at a time, while the kernels cook and slowly absorb liquid and flavor. A few simple steps during cooking will allow you to

achieve the right balance of starch release and flavor absorption.

Use Italian short-grain rice varieties such as Arborio or Carnaroli (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72). They're shorter and plumper than long-grain rice and have considerably more starch. The starch is released during cooking, creating the distinctively soft, creamy texture of great risotto, while the kernels remain firm to the bite. The rice is stirred in with the sweated aromatics and coated with oil or butter—a process called “toasting,” which forms a capsule around the kernels that prevents too much liquid from being absorbed too fast.

Add hot liquid incrementally to slowly draw starch from the rice. You can use plain water, but broth makes risotto more interesting. As a general rule, you should prepare about three and a half times as much liquid as rice. You might not need all of it, depend-

AL DENTE is a common Italian term used to indicate doneness. Pasta or rice cooked al dente (literally “to the tooth”) should be tender but still firm at the core. A well-cooked risotto is both creamy and al dente.



Best Risotto



Saffron and Shrimp Risotto with Scallions

ing on the pan and the intensity of the heat. Risotto can be tight and dense or soft and runny (*all'onda*, in Italian), depending on your personal taste. For a looser texture, just add more broth toward the end without letting it completely evaporate.

Stir frequently. Risotto needs to be stirred often to prevent the released starches from scorching and to blend these starches with the fat and the flavoring ingredients. You can, however, take a short break after each addition of liquid. One of the questions I'm most often asked is, Can risotto be made in advance? Once it's fully made, risotto doesn't wait; it must be served immediately. The rice will continue to absorb moisture and release starch well after it's been taken off the heat, becoming *pappa*, or mushy as baby food. But if you want to partially make it ahead you can use a restaurant do-ahead trick: cook the rice only up to a certain point and finish it to order (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72).

Flavor any way you wish

Vegetables, mushrooms, seafood, meat—everything's good in risotto. Just think of what flavors and textures work well together, and you can create a dish with a new personality each time. Add ingredients just after the wine has evaporated to develop a foundation of flavor. Ingredients that are already cooked or that cook quickly, like shrimp, should be added in the last few minutes.

Finish risotto with either butter or olive oil. Many people think that only butter can properly finish risotto. While it certainly makes risotto creamier and, well, buttery, I think olive oil gives a cleaner, more pristine finish, and I prefer it on seafood and vegetable risottos.

7 steps to a classic risotto

Serves six



1 Get ready to cook

Read through all the steps and choose the ingredients for your risotto.

Measure out all the ingredients and prepare any cooked vegetables or meats, if using.

Bring the liquid for Step 5 almost to a boil in a large pot. Reduce the heat to very low; the liquid should stay hot but not simmer.

What you'll need

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 cups aromatics (see Step 2)
- 2 cups short-grain risotto rice, such as Arborio or Carnaroli
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 1 choice of foundation flavor (see Step 4)
- 5 to 7 cups broth or water
- 1 or 2 choices of vegetables, seafood, or meat (see Step 6)

FOR FINISHING

- (see Step 7):
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil or unsalted butter
- ½ to 1½ cups freshly grated cheese (optional)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper



2 Sweat the aromatics

Heat ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil over medium heat in a heavy-duty 3- to 4-quart straight-sided sauté pan at least 10 inches wide or in a similar-size Dutch oven. Add your choice of aromatics (see list at right) and ½ teaspoon kosher salt, and cook slowly, stirring frequently with a wooden spoon until softened, 8 to 10 minutes. Add ½ cup water, lower the heat to medium-low, and continue cooking until the water is completely gone and

the aromatics are soft and glistening but not browned, 5 to 10 minutes more.

Use in any combination for a total of 2 cups, chopped medium-fine:

Onions
Shallots
Leeks



3 Toast the rice & add the wine

Add 2 cups risotto rice to the pan and raise the heat to medium. Cook, stirring constantly, to coat the rice with the oil, about 3 minutes. Toasted rice should still be white and glistening, but you should hear a clicking sound when you stir it.

Pour in 1 cup dry white wine and cook, stirring constantly, until it's mostly absorbed, 2 to 3 minutes.

LESS IS SOMETIMES MORE. Limit ingredient add-ins in Steps 4 and 6 to one or two at each step, or even none at all. Too many flavors can muddy the taste of risotto.



4 Create the foundation of flavor

If you want, choose one or two ingredients to be the main flavor backdrop for your risotto, and stir them into the rice (see the list at right). For saffron and dried mushrooms, add the soaking liquid too (in this case, you may need less liquid in Step 5).

Choose one or two (optional):

Saffron: ½ teaspoon saffron threads, steeped in ½ cup hot water or broth for at least 5 minutes

Tomatoes: one 28-ounce can puréed tomatoes (1½ cups)

Dried mushrooms: 1 to 1½ cups dried mushrooms, soaked in 2 cups hot water for 30 minutes and cut in ¼-inch slices (strain the soaking liquid)

Radicchio: 2 cups, finely sliced

continued...

CONSIDER TEXTURE.

If your flavor foundation (see Step 4) is a liquid or a purée, you may want to consider adding ingredients with firmer texture in Step 6, for textural balance.



5 Add liquid in increments

If the pot of hot broth (or water) isn't already next to the risotto pan, move it to an adjacent burner now. Ladle 1½ to 2 cups hot liquid to barely cover the rice and stir constantly. Add ½ teaspoon kosher salt, adjust the heat to maintain a gentle simmer, and keep stirring. When all the liquid has been absorbed—and the rice is dry enough that your stirring spoon leaves a trail showing the bottom of the pot—ladle in another cup of liquid, again stirring until it's all absorbed. Continue adding liquid in 1 cup increments, always stirring, until the rice is nearly but not fully al dente; this is usually 12 to 16 minutes after the first addition of liquid.

Choose one (5 to 7 cups):

Vegetable broth
Chicken broth
Beef broth
Fish broth
Water



Adding liquid slowly and stirring frequently are the keys to making perfect risotto.

RISOTTO IS A GOOD DESTINATION for left-over roasted or slow-cooked meats. Just shred them and add in Step 6 to heat through and to allow the flavors to blend with the rice.

6 Add vegetables, seafood, or meat

When the risotto is a few minutes away from al dente, add your flavor highlight from the list below. These are ingredients that cook quickly, that are already cooked and just need to be heated through, or that you prefer to have a firm texture to add bite to the dish. Continue stirring and ladling liquid as in Step 5.

Choose one or more (optional):

COOKED VEGETABLES

Leeks: white part only, cut in thin slices, 2 cups, sautéed

Zucchini: cut into 2x½x½-inch strips, 2 cups, sautéed

Asparagus: cut in 1-inch pieces, 2 cups, sautéed

Butternut squash: 1 pound, peeled, seeded, roasted, and cut into ¼-inch cubes

RAW SEAFOOD

Shrimp: 1 pound medium (51–60 count), peeled and deveined

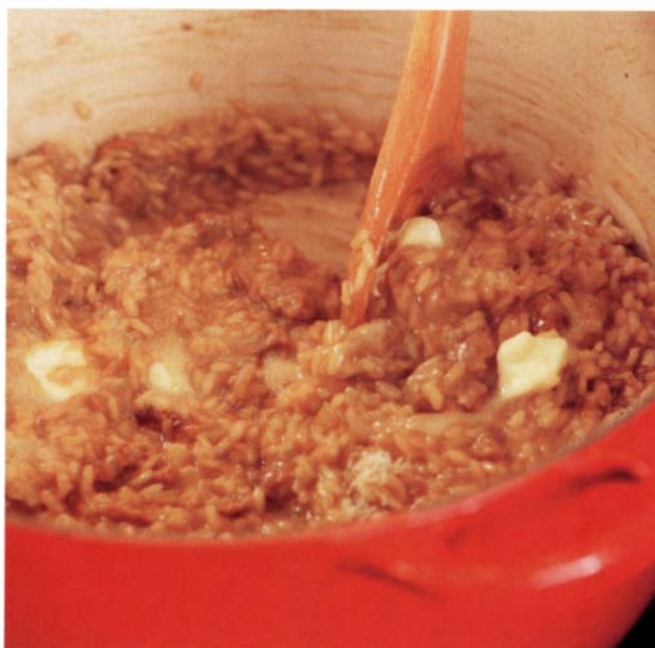
Bay scallops: 1 pound

COOKED MEATS

Sausage: 6 ounces (about 2 links), removed from casing, crumbled, and sautéed

Bacon or pancetta: 6 ounces (about 6 slices), cut in ¼-inch dice, sautéed

Chicken, beef, or pork: braised or roasted, 1 cup, small diced



7 Finish your risotto

After the addition of at least 5 cups of broth or water (16 to 20 minutes from the first liquid addition), taste the rice to determine whether it's al dente and pleasantly creamy. If it is, remove it immediately from the heat. Otherwise, let it cook a little longer, incorporating more liquid (up to a total of 7 cups). Stir in the finishing ingredients from the list at right, taste and adjust seasoning with salt and freshly ground pepper. Serve the risotto immediately.

Choose one or more (optional):

Parsley: chopped, 2 to 3 tablespoons

Basil: chopped, 2 to 3 tablespoons

Mint: chopped, 2 to 3 tablespoons

Scallions: (white and green parts) thinly sliced, 3 to 4 tablespoons

Lemon zest: finely grated, 1 teaspoon

Orange zest: finely grated, 1 teaspoon

Balsamic vinegar: 1 to 2 teaspoons

Choose one, 2 to 3 tablespoons:

Unsalted butter

Extra-virgin olive oil

Choose one grated cheese, ½ to 1½ cups (optional):

Parmigiano Reggiano

Grana Padano

Pecorino romano or toscano

SEAFOOD AND CHEESE DON'T MIX.

For seafood risottos, don't add grated cheese. And for these I like to use olive oil as a finishing ingredient instead of butter.

Try one of Lidia's suggested risottos

Radicchio & Bacon

Add radicchio in Step 4 and bacon in Step 6. Finish with butter and Grana Padano; use chicken broth.

Saffron & Shrimp

Add saffron in Step 4 and shrimp in Step 6. Finish with olive oil but no cheese; use fish broth.

Chicken & Mushrooms

Add dried mushrooms in Step 4 and chicken in Step 6. Finish with butter and Parmigiano; use chicken broth.

Sausage & Leek

Add sausage and leeks in Step 6. Finish with butter and Parmigiano; use chicken or vegetable broth.

Asparagus & Scallion

Add sautéed asparagus in Step 6. Finish with scallions, olive oil, and pecorino; use chicken or vegetable broth.

Lidia Matticchio Bastianich is an award-winning chef and the co-owner of Felidia, Becco, and Del Posto in New York City. Her latest book is Lidia's Family Table. ♦

Tilapia, Fast & Flavorful

BY LESLIE GLOVER PENDLETON

It takes just three easy steps to boost the flavor of this mild, quick-cooking fish



1 Coat

Coat the fillets with breadcrumbs, herbs, spices, or nuts, which will form a flavorful crust.



2 Sear or pan-fry

Use one of these cooking methods to set the coating and give the fish a browned exterior and rich flavor.



3 Garnish

Give tilapia a final flavor boost with a tangy sauce or salad, a splash of vinegar, or just a squeeze of lemon.

Tilapia might not be as familiar to you as other mild, white fish like cod or flounder, but you may have noticed that it's often the freshest looking fish at the counter. Also known as St. Peter's fish, tilapia isn't new—in fact, it originated in the Nile River and is thought to be the fish Jesus multiplied in the well-known Bible story. What's new is that this freshwater fish is now farm-raised all over the world, so it's easy to find. It also takes no time to cook, making it a perfect choice for weeknight dinners.

To spice up this mild fish, I use three simple flavoring techniques. First, I coat the fillets with breadcrumbs, nuts, herbs, or spices; these form

a delicious crust for the fish. Next, I sear or pan-fry the fillets to cook them through and deepen the flavor of the crust. Then I add a bright garnish for a final flavor boost—this could be a sauce, a salsa, or even just a squeeze of lemon.

If you're searing, a heavy-bottomed, nonstick skillet will ensure that the fish won't stick to the pan. For pan-frying (as for the Crispy Breaded Tilapia recipe on the right), you won't need a nonstick skillet, but you will need more oil, which should be heated in the pan until hot but not smoking. You might have to adjust the heat between medium and medium-high to make sure that the fish doesn't burn.

Crispy Breaded Tilapia with Classic Tartar Sauce

Serves four.

½ cup mayonnaise
2 tablespoons minced red onion
2 tablespoons sweet pickle relish or dill pickle relish
2 tablespoons minced fresh flat-leaf parsley
1 tablespoon capers, drained, rinsed, and chopped
2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
⅓ cup all-purpose flour
2 large eggs
2 cups fresh white breadcrumbs
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
4 skinless tilapia fillets (about 4 ounces each)
Vegetable oil for the pan
1 large lemon, cut into wedges

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 200°F. Line a baking sheet with paper towels and set aside.

In a small bowl, stir together the mayonnaise, red onion, relish, parsley, capers, and lemon juice. Cover and refrigerate.

Line up three wide shallow dishes. Put the flour in the first; beat the eggs lightly in the second; put the breadcrumbs in the third. Season the tilapia with salt and pepper. Working with one fillet at a time, coat it with flour and shake off the excess. Then dip the fillet in the egg and dredge it in the breadcrumbs, patting them on to help them adhere. Set each breaded fillet on a plate or tray as you finish it.

Pour the oil ¼ inch deep into a 10- to 12-inch skillet. Heat over medium heat until it is hot but not smoking, or until a breadcrumb sizzles and browns quickly when dropped in the oil. Cook two of the tilapia fillets until they are crisp and browned, 2 to 3 minutes on each side. Transfer to the baking sheet, sprinkle with salt, and keep warm in the oven while you cook the remaining two fillets.

Serve immediately with lemon wedges and the tartar sauce.





Spice-Rubbed Tilapia with Tomatillo, Black Bean & Mango Salad

Serves four.

Tomatillos look like small green tomatoes surrounded by a papery husk. They're common in Mexican cuisine, and their refreshing flavor is great either raw or cooked.

- 1 15-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed**
- ½ pound tomatillos, papery covering discarded, fruit rinsed and small diced**
- 1 ripe medium mango, peeled, pitted, and small diced**
- ½ cup small-diced red onion (from about a quarter of a large onion)**
- ⅓ cup fresh lime juice**
- ⅓ cup plus 2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- 1½ teaspoons chili powder**
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin**
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano**
- Kosher salt**
- 4 skinless tilapia fillets (about 4 ounces each)**

Put a heatproof serving platter on a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 200°F.

In a medium bowl, combine the beans, tomatillos, mango, red onion, lime juice, ⅓ cup of the vegetable oil, cilantro, and a few grinds of black pepper; toss gently. Let the salad sit at room temperature while you cook the fish.

Mix ¼ teaspoon black pepper with the chili powder, cumin, oregano, and 1 teaspoon salt. Rub both sides of the tilapia fillets with the mixture. In a large (12-inch) nonstick skillet, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of the oil over medium-high heat until hot. Cook two of the tilapia fillets until lightly browned and the flesh is opaque and cooked through, about 2 minutes on each side. Transfer the fish to the platter in the oven to keep warm while you cook the remaining two fillets. Transfer the fillets to the platter, and spoon half of the salad on top. Serve with the remaining salad on the side.

VARIATIONS: For a different spice combination, try rubbing the fish with Old Bay Seasoning. And for other salad combinations, try chickpeas or red beans in place of the black beans, and red tomato or cucumber in place of the tomatillo.

At the market

In the supermarket, tilapia is usually sold skinned and filleted. Sometimes the flesh is solid white, sometimes it has a pinkish tone, and often the fillets have a stripe of dark meat down the middle—all of these variations are fine. However, make sure that your fillets have a firm appearance, with no soft spots. Like all fish, tilapia should have a delicate, clean aroma of the sea.

To test for doneness, use the tip of a knife to peek into the middle of a fillet; the flesh should be opaque but still moist.



Herb-Coated Tilapia with Lemon

Serves four.

- 1 medium lemon**
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup chopped fresh herbs (any combination of parsley, thyme, mint, chives, and cilantro)**
- 4 skinless tilapia fillets (about 4 ounces each)**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**

Finely grate the zest from the lemon, then cut the lemon in quarters and set aside.

Mix the herbs and lemon zest on a plate. Sprinkle the fillets with $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon pepper and coat both sides of each fillet with herbs, pressing them on so they adhere.

In a large (12-inch) nonstick skillet, heat the oil over medium heat until hot. Cook the tilapia until the flesh is opaque and just cooked through, about 2 minutes on each side (cut into the thick part of a fillet to check). Serve the tilapia with the lemon quarters, for squeezing at the table. (Note: If you're serving this dish to company, you might want to cut wedges from a lemon that hasn't been zested.)



Peanut-Crusted Tilapia with Frizzled Ginger and Scallions

Serves two.

- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup vegetable oil**
- 3 medium scallions, cut lengthwise into fine matchsticks (about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup)**
- 1 2x1 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch knob of fresh ginger, peeled and cut into fine matchsticks (about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup)**
- Kosher salt**
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour**
- 1 large egg**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup salted peanuts, finely chopped**
- 2 skinless tilapia fillets (about 4 ounces each)**
- 4 teaspoons seasoned rice vinegar, or to taste**
- Freshly ground black pepper**

In a 10- to 12-inch, heavy, nonstick skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat until hot. Add the scallions and ginger and cook, stirring occasionally, until they're just golden, with some green still visible on the scallions, 2 to 4 minutes. Remove the skillet from the heat, and with a slotted spoon, transfer the vegetables to paper towels to drain (leave the oil in the skillet). Toss the ginger and scallions lightly with salt.

Line up three wide shallow dishes. Put the flour in the first; beat the egg in the second; put the peanuts in the third. Season the tilapia fillets with salt. Dredge one fillet in the flour, shaking off the excess. Dip the fillet in the egg, then coat it with peanuts. Set the fillet on a plate and repeat with the second fillet.

Reheat the oil in the skillet over medium-high heat. Add the tilapia fillets and cook until golden on each side and the flesh is opaque and cooked through, 3 to 4 minutes on each side (reduce the heat if they brown too fast). Put the tilapia on dinner plates, sprinkle with the rice vinegar and pepper to taste, top with the frizzled vegetables, and serve immediately.

ALTERNATIVE COATINGS:

Instead of peanuts, try coating the fish with cashews or sesame seeds. Or just season the fillets with salt and pepper and sear them with no coating at all.

Leslie Glover Pendleton is a recipe developer, cooking teacher, food stylist, and the author of Simply Shrimp, Salmon and (Fish) Steaks. ♦



Vanilla Whipped Cream
with Strawberries



Chocolate Buttercream with
Toasted Almond Slices

A Piece of Cake

With one simple cake, two fabulous frostings, and endless flavor variations, impressive layer cakes are easier than you think

BY KATHERINE EASTMAN SEELEY

I love making layer cakes. Whether it's Mother's Day, my daughter's birthday, or a special celebration with friends, I always seem to be baking a cake. But somehow very few of my friends share my enthusiasm. No matter how hard I try to convince them that it can be easy and fun, they still think making layer cakes is out of their league and that anyone other than a seasoned baker should steer clear of it. If you're of the same opinion, think again. Trust me, making stunning four-layer cakes isn't that difficult. With a few base recipes, you can make almost any cake you want.

Through the years, I've developed three simple cake "components": A reliable and versatile vanilla base cake, a fluffy whipped-cream filling, and a smooth buttercream. I use the whipped-cream filling to make a casual, whimsical stacked cake with fresh



Raspberry Whipped
Cream with Jumble Berries



Orange Buttercream Topped
with a Slice of Orange

Vanilla Butter Cake

Makes two 9-inch cakes.

Nonstick cooking spray for the pan

10½ ounces (2¾ cups) cake flour

1½ cups granulated sugar

¾ teaspoons baking powder

¾ teaspoon table salt

6 ounces (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, cut into tablespoon-size pieces, at room temperature

¾ cup whole or low-fat milk, at room temperature

1½ teaspoons vanilla extract

4 large eggs, at room temperature

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Lightly coat two 9x2-inch round cake pans with nonstick cooking spray and line the bottoms with parchment (see *Where to Buy It*, p. 80).

Sift the cake flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Mix on low speed (#2 on a KitchenAid mixer) until the ingredients are well combined.

Add the softened butter pieces and mix on low speed for 20 to 30 seconds to mix the butter into the dry ingredients—

the mixture should look a little lumpy, with the largest lumps being about the size of a hazelnut. Add the milk and vanilla extract. Mix on medium speed (#5 on a KitchenAid) for 1 minute to thoroughly blend the ingredients and aerate the batter. Scrape the sides of the bowl with a spatula.

Add the eggs one at a time, mixing on medium speed for about 15 seconds after each addition. Scrape down the bowl after the second egg.

Divide the batter equally between the two prepared pans. Use a small offset spatula or spoon to spread the batter evenly in each pan. Bake until the cakes are golden brown and the tops feel firm but spring back a little when tapped lightly with a finger, and a pick inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean, 30 to 35 minutes. Set the pans on a rack, run a table knife around the edge of each cake and let cool in the pans for 30 minutes. Invert the cakes onto the rack, lift the pans, peel off the parchment, and let the cakes cool completely. If baking ahead, wrap the cakes tightly in plastic after cooling.

Cutting layers



If the tops of the cakes have mounded unevenly, level them by removing the top crust with a long serrated knife.

To slice one cake into two layers, start by tracing a line around the middle of the cake with a long serrated knife. Then slowly rotate the cake while following that line with the knife and cut through the cake toward the center. After a few rotations you will have sliced the cake in two.

If you don't get a straight cut, match the unevenly cut slices when assembling the cake, to prevent your finished cake from tilting.

berries; when I want something fancier, I use the buttercream for both filling and frosting. Now here's the best part: By choosing different flavors for either the whipped cream or buttercream, I can make more than a dozen different cakes with just these three recipes.

Before making your cake, consider how much time you have. If you're running short on time, opt for a whipped-cream-filled cake. Making it is a cinch, and the cake looks spectacular with whipped cream and berries oozing between the layers. But don't be afraid of buttercream cakes: The ones on these pages won't bog you down for endless hours—they require just a little more time and focus. The good news is that you don't have to spread buttercream to perfection. Using a small spoon to make swirls and curls with the frosting is a lot more fun—and forgiving—than creating a perfectly smooth surface. You'll have a pretty cake that doesn't need much in the way of decoration. And if you decide to dress it up a little, choose a simple embellishment to keep things quick and trouble-free (see "Finishing touches," p. 69). You'll be surprised by what a handful of artfully arranged berries or a small mound of chocolate shavings piled in the center can do for a cake.

My tricks for easy cake-making

A quick method for Vanilla Butter Cake will speed things up quite a bit. The vanilla butter cake I make is tender, not overly sweet, and impossibly easy. Instead of the more traditional creaming method, which involves beating butter and sugar together until they're airy and fluffy, I use the quick-blend method. I start with the dry ingredients and mix in the wet ingredients in two stages: first the butter and milk, then the eggs. This method is so easy that the hardest part is remembering to bring the butter, milk, and eggs to room temperature.

To get the fluffiest whipped-cream filling, finish it by hand. I don't have to tell you that making whipped cream is, well, a piece of cake. But I can offer one tip for getting the best consistency for whipped cream that you want to use as a cake filling. I start whip-

do it ahead

You can make the buttercream two days ahead and bake the cakes a day ahead. It's OK to put the buttercream cake together the night before (store in the fridge and remove two hours before you want to eat it), but assemble the whipped-cream cake shortly before serving.

Whipped cream is an easy filling for a gorgeous berry-stacked cake

Vanilla Whipped Cream

Yields about 7 cups, enough to fill and frost a 9-inch four-layer cake.

3 cups heavy or whipping cream
5 tablespoons granulated sugar
1½ teaspoons vanilla extract

Chill the bowl and whisk attachment of a stand mixer for 20 minutes in the refrigerator or 5 minutes in the freezer. Pour the heavy cream into the bowl and whisk on medium-high speed until it just starts to thicken. Slow the speed down to medium and gradually pour in the sugar. Continue to whisk until soft peaks form.

Add the vanilla extract and continue to whisk by hand until the cream is smooth, and stiff peaks form (the cream will stand up straight when the whisk is raised).



To have more control over the final thickness of the whipped cream, finish whisking it by hand. Check the texture by lifting the whisk.

FLAVOR VARIATIONS

For the full recipe at left.

Instead of vanilla, add the flavoring of your choice to the cream when you add the sugar, and mix as in the main recipe. The sugar amounts below are in addition to the sugar in the main recipe. Before you begin whisking by hand, taste and adjust the flavoring.

RASPBERRY OR STRAWBERRY

2¼ cups raspberry or strawberry purée (purée the fruit in a blender and strain)

2 tablespoons granulated sugar
The purée increases the amount of whipped cream, so you may not need it all; save the extra for topping other desserts.

LEMON

¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

3 tablespoons granulated sugar
1 tablespoon finely grated lemon zest

ORANGE

½ cup freshly squeezed orange juice

1 tablespoon finely grated orange zest

CHOCOLATE

¼ cup sifted unsweetened cocoa powder, preferably Dutch-processed

1 tablespoon granulated sugar
Turn off the mixer to add the cocoa powder. Once whipped, let the cream sit in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour to dissolve the cocoa. Whisk briefly before serving.

MOCHA

¼ cup sifted unsweetened cocoa powder, preferably Dutch-processed

2 tablespoons instant espresso dissolved in 2 tablespoons boiling water

1 tablespoon granulated sugar
Turn off the mixer to add the cocoa and espresso. Follow the instructions for Chocolate, above.



Four-Layer Cake with Whipped Cream and Berries

Yields one four-layer cake; serves twelve.

Use any whipped cream flavor and berry combination you like.

1 recipe Vanilla Butter Cake
1 recipe Whipped Cream
(your choice of flavor)
6¼ cups berries (strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, or a combination, large berries sliced)

Level the cakes, if necessary, and slice each cake into two layers (see "Cutting layers," p. 65), making a total of four layers of cake.

Place the bottom layer on a flat serving platter or a cake stand lined with strips of waxed paper to keep it clean while assembling the cake. Top the layer with a scant 1½ cups whipped cream, spreading the cream to the edges of the cake with a metal cake spatula (see Equipment, p. 28) so that it's almost dripping over the sides. Top with 1½ cups berries, making sure

some of the berries are around the edges of the cake so you can see them between the layers. Repeat with the next two layers. For the final layer, spread about 1½ cups whipped cream on top of the cake with the spatula. Arrange the berries artfully on top of the cream.



Favorite cake combinations

WHIPPED-CREAM CAKES

Vanilla whipped cream and strawberries

Chocolate whipped cream and raspberries

Raspberry or strawberry whipped cream with mixed berries

Lemon whipped cream with mixed berries

BUTTERCREAM CAKES

Chocolate buttercream with brandy-thinned raspberry jam and toasted, sliced almonds

Raspberry buttercream with brandy-thinned raspberry jam and fresh raspberries on top

Coffee buttercream with chocolate-covered espresso beans on top

Grand Marnier buttercream with Grand Marnier-thinned orange marmelade and chocolate shavings

ping with a stand or hand-held mixer, but I always stop beating when the cream starts to thicken. I finish it by hand so I have more control over the final thickness. I like the whipped cream for these cakes to be smooth and quite thick (but not overbeaten), so that if you scoop a dollop onto a plate, it stands up softly.

My fuss-free method makes a smooth, bakery-style buttercream. Taking a tip from cookbook author Rose Levy Beranbaum, I make this classic cake frosting using corn syrup to replace some of the sugar. I have no doubt this buttercream will become your favorite cake frosting. It's incredibly airy and smooth and easier than traditional buttercream (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72).



Jam adds an extra hit of flavor

If you like, use jam thinned with liqueur to add another layer of flavor to your cake. For a four-layer buttercream cake, mix $\frac{3}{4}$ cup seedless jam with 3 tablespoons liqueur, such as brandy or Grand Marnier. After you've spread the buttercream on the first cake layer, spread a third of the jam on the next cake layer, flip it, and lay it over the buttercream filling. Repeat the process for the next two layers.

This smooth buttercream frosting is stress-free and makes a real impression

Vanilla Buttercream

Yields 7½ to 8 cups, enough to fill and frost a 9-inch four-layer cake.

5 large egg whites
1¼ cups granulated sugar
½ cup plus 2 tablespoons light corn syrup
1 pound, 4 ounces (2½ cups) unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 tablespoon vanilla extract

Place the egg whites in the clean bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment and whisk on medium-high speed until foamy. Sprinkle in 6 tablespoons of the sugar and beat on high speed to medium peaks (the whites should be smooth, full, and shiny, and the peaks should curl a little). Turn off the mixer.

Combine the remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar and the corn syrup in a medium (3-quart) saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring briefly to dissolve the sugar. Continue to cook just until the mixture comes to a rolling boil.

Immediately remove the syrup from the heat, turn the mixer onto medium-high speed, and slowly pour the syrup down the side of the bowl in a steady stream, being very careful not to let the syrup hit the whisk.

Reduce the speed to medium and continue whisking until the whites are barely warm, 5 to 7 minutes. Add the butter 1 tablespoon at a time. Add the vanilla and continue beating until the frosting is smooth and creamy.

FLAVOR VARIATIONS

For the full recipe at left.

In place of vanilla, add one of the following flavorings at low speed to prevent splattering, then increase speed to medium to blend.

LEMON

¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
1 tablespoon finely grated lemon zest

ORANGE

¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed orange juice
¼ cup finely grated orange zest (from about 3 large oranges)

STRAWBERRY OR RASPBERRY

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup berry purée (purée the fruit in a blender and strain)

LIQUEUR

2 tablespoons liqueur (such as Frangelico, Grand Marnier, Baileys, Kahlua, Chambord), more to taste

CHOCOLATE

12 ounces bittersweet chocolate, melted

COFFEE

1½ tablespoons instant espresso dissolved in 1 tablespoon boiling water



Mixing tip

Pour the hot syrup slowly down the side of the bowl in a thin stream. If the syrup hits the whisk it will splatter and harden inside the bowl.



Four-Layer Cake with Buttercream

Yields one four-layer cake; serves twelve.

1 recipe Vanilla Butter Cake
1 recipe Buttercream (your choice of flavor)

Level the cakes, if necessary, and slice each cake into two layers (see "Cutting layers," p. 65), making a total of four layers of cake.

Place the bottom layer on a flat serving platter or a cake stand lined with strips of waxed paper to keep it clean while assembling the cake. Top the layer with a scant 1½ cups buttercream, spreading it evenly with a metal cake spatula (see Equipment, p. 28) almost to the cake's edge. Repeat with the

next two layers. Set the top layer over the third layer of filling and frost the cake with the remaining buttercream, following the instructions below.

CRUMB COATING

Before frosting the cake, it helps to apply a light coat of frosting (called crumb coating) to seal the cake crumbs in. To do this, spoon about ½ cup buttercream into a small bowl. Spread it in a very thin layer over the entire cake with a small metal cake spatula. You should be able to see the cake layers through the icing. Chill the cake for about 20 minutes or until the icing is firm. Proceed to frost the cake.

FROSTING THE CAKE

Spread the icing thickly and evenly over the entire cake with a large metal cake spatula. Don't worry about getting a smooth, perfect finish; just make sure the cake is completely covered and the frosting is spread uniformly. You shouldn't be able to see the layers underneath the buttercream.

With the back of a teaspoon, smear the icing and pull it upward to form curls and swirls over the entire cake.

Katherine Eastman Seeley is a pastry chef and food writer. ♦

Finishing touches



Decorating a finished layer cake can be as simple or as elaborate as you make it. I like to keep it neat and simple, with only a few elements arranged artfully on the top or the sides. Nut slices or coconut flakes will easily stick to the sides of a cake: Just grab a small handful at a time and gently pat them all around the cake. Step back from your work to get a better view of what you're doing. You can fill gaps and correct small mistakes at the end. Here is a list of my favorite finishing touches:

Lemon- or orange-zest curls

Fresh berries and fruit (slices or wedges)

Dried fruit

Toasted nuts (slices, slivers, or whole)

Shaved chocolate curls (made with a vegetable peeler)

Grated chocolate

Chocolate-covered espresso beans

Coconut flakes

Melted chocolate drizzled from a pastry bag

Mint leaves

Online video: See how to assemble and frost a layer cake at finecooking.com

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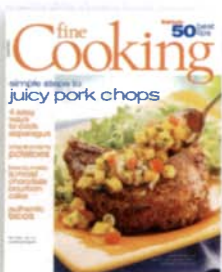
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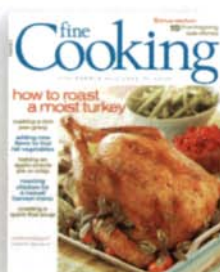
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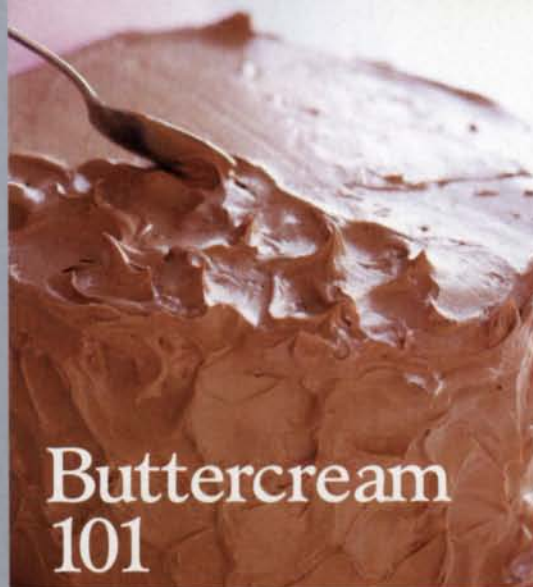
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BY JENNIFER ARMENTROUT

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To many home cooks, buttercream cake icing is butter whipped with confectioners' sugar and flavoring. To pastry chefs, buttercream usually means butter whipped with meringue or beaten egg yolks. There are three basic types of egg-based buttercreams, all of which are lighter and more luxurious than the often gritty and overly sweet confectioners' sugar version.

Swiss buttercream starts with Swiss meringue: Egg whites and sugar are heated together in a mixing bowl over a hot-water bath until the sugar dissolves, then they're whipped

to stiff peaks. Next, butter and flavorings are whipped in. Swiss buttercream is quick and easy to make, but it's denser and less stable than Italian buttercream.

The lightest and sweetest of the buttercreams, **Italian buttercream**, is based on Italian meringue, made by whipping soft-ball-stage (234° to 240°F) sugar syrup into already-whipped egg whites, effectively cooking and stabilizing the whites. Once the meringue cools a bit, soft butter and flavorings are whipped in. The buttercream recipe on p. 68 is a simplified version of Italian buttercream that uses corn syrup in the sugar syrup, so it's not necessary to monitor the syrup temperature with a thermometer.

Decadent **French buttercream** uses the same technique as Italian buttercream except that it begins with beating the sugar syrup into whipped whole eggs or whole eggs plus extra yolks, rather than using just egg whites. In addition to giving it a yellow hue, the yolks make French buttercream richer and heavier, in contrast to the billowy texture and snowy white color of Italian buttercream.

How to trim a baby artichoke

Cute, tender baby artichokes need a bit of prep work to get them ready for cooking, but once you get the hang of it, the work goes quickly. Once the artichokes are trimmed, everything is edible, including the choke—the fuzzy center, which is inedible when the artichoke matures.



1 Snap off and discard the outer leaves until you reach the tender, pale-green interior cone of leaves.

2 With a paring knife, trim the stem to within 1 to 1½ inches of the base. Trim around the base to smooth off the nubbins left by the outer leaves, then trim off the fibrous outer layer of the stem.

3 Cut ½ to 1 inch off the tip of the leaf cone, then cut the artichoke in half lengthwise.

4 To keep the artichokes from browning, float them in a bowl of lemon water until you're ready to cook them.

Fingerling potatoes come in lots of varieties



Ruby Crescent, Purple Peruvian, Russian Banana—these may sound like designer paint colors, but they're actually varieties of fingerling potatoes. These petite spuds, which somewhat resemble misshapen fingers (hence the name), come in many varieties. They all tend to have thinner skin and denser flesh than round potatoes like Yukon Golds or red-skins. We find the Ruby Crescents and Purple Peruvians to have a delicate, slightly sweet flavor, whereas the Russian Bananas are more robust and earthy.

Fingerlings are fairly all-purpose, lending themselves to roasting, sautéing, boiling, and steaming (see p. 47). Feel free to substitute fingerlings for baby potatoes in your favorite recipes. The Purples make for a delicious and dramatic potato salad on their own or as part of a mix; just cook the different varieties separately, as the cooking times may vary slightly. For a real treat, try slicing fingerlings into 1/4-inch-thick coins and poaching them at a simmer in olive oil until tender, about 15 minutes. If you're a garlic lover, throw in a handful of peeled, halved garlic cloves before poaching. Remove the potatoes from the oil with a slotted spoon and serve them sprinkled with coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper. They're silky, succulent, and a cinch to make.

—Allison Ebri, test kitchen associate

What's in your mesclun mix?

Ready-to-go salad mixes are all the rage these days, judging by the amount of shelf space devoted to them in supermarket produce sections. One of these popular mixes is mesclun, also known as spring mix or mixed baby greens. This blend contains 10 or more varieties of tender, young let-

tuces and other greens, some of which may be familiar to you and others that probably aren't. So for all you curious types who have been wondering which leaf is the Lollo Rossa and which is the Tango, here's a little guide to some of the greens you're likely to encounter in a bag of spring mix.



Lollo Rossa: delicate & mildly bitter



Red oak leaf: mildly bitter



Spinach: dense & mineral-y



Green oak leaf: sweet & mild



Mizuna: biting & mustardy



Arugula: peppery & assertive



Red chard: salty & rich



Tango: sweet & pungent



Mâche: delicate & floral



Tatsoi: succulent & spicy sweet



Frisée: bittersweet



Red romaine: earthy & savory



Green romaine: sweet & juicy

Risotto

It's all in the rice

Well, maybe not entirely—the cooking method is important, too. But technique alone, as shown in Lidia Bastianich's "How to Make the Best Risotto," p. 54, won't give you the rich, creamy texture of authentic risotto. You have to use the right kind of rice. Many of us have come to identify risotto with Arborio, but other varieties, such as Carnaroli, Baldo, and Vialone Nano, make excellent risotto as well.

Compared to Carnaroli and Vialone Nano, Arborio and Baldo have a higher starch content and tend to absorb less liquid, resulting in a stickier, more compact risotto. They're also less forgiving, going from just right to overcooked in a heartbeat.

Carnaroli and, even more so, Vialone Nano contain less starch and absorb lots of liquid, producing a creamier, fluid risotto. Vialone Nano is especially suited to seafood risottos, which are traditionally looser.

Some supermarkets carry Carnaroli in addition to Arborio, but the other two are more of a gourmet shop product. See *Where to Buy It*, p. 80, for a mail-order source.

—Laura Giannatempo, assistant editor

A trick for making risotto ahead

If you've read the risotto feature on p. 54, you know that a fresh batch of risotto takes at least 30 minutes to prepare. How then, you might wonder, does your favorite Italian restaurant manage to serve you a hot dish of perfectly cooked risotto in about 10 minutes? The answer is par-cooking. If you try to make risotto ahead completely and then reheat it, it'll be overcooked and mushy. Instead, you can cook it until it's about halfway done—the rice should still be rather firm inside—and then spread it out on a baking sheet to stop cooking and cool. Cover the rice and set it aside at room temperature for up to two hours. When you're ready to serve the risotto, return it to the pot and resume adding hot liquid until it's perfectly al dente, a few minutes later.



Carnaroli
rice



Leftovers: How to make risotto cakes

Reheated leftover risotto is dense and mushy and not very good. But leftover risotto shaped into little cakes, coated in crumbs, and fried to a crunchy golden brown is a special treat. I've been known to make risotto just so I can make risotto cakes—I love the way the crunchy coating adds another texture to the soft, creamy risotto.

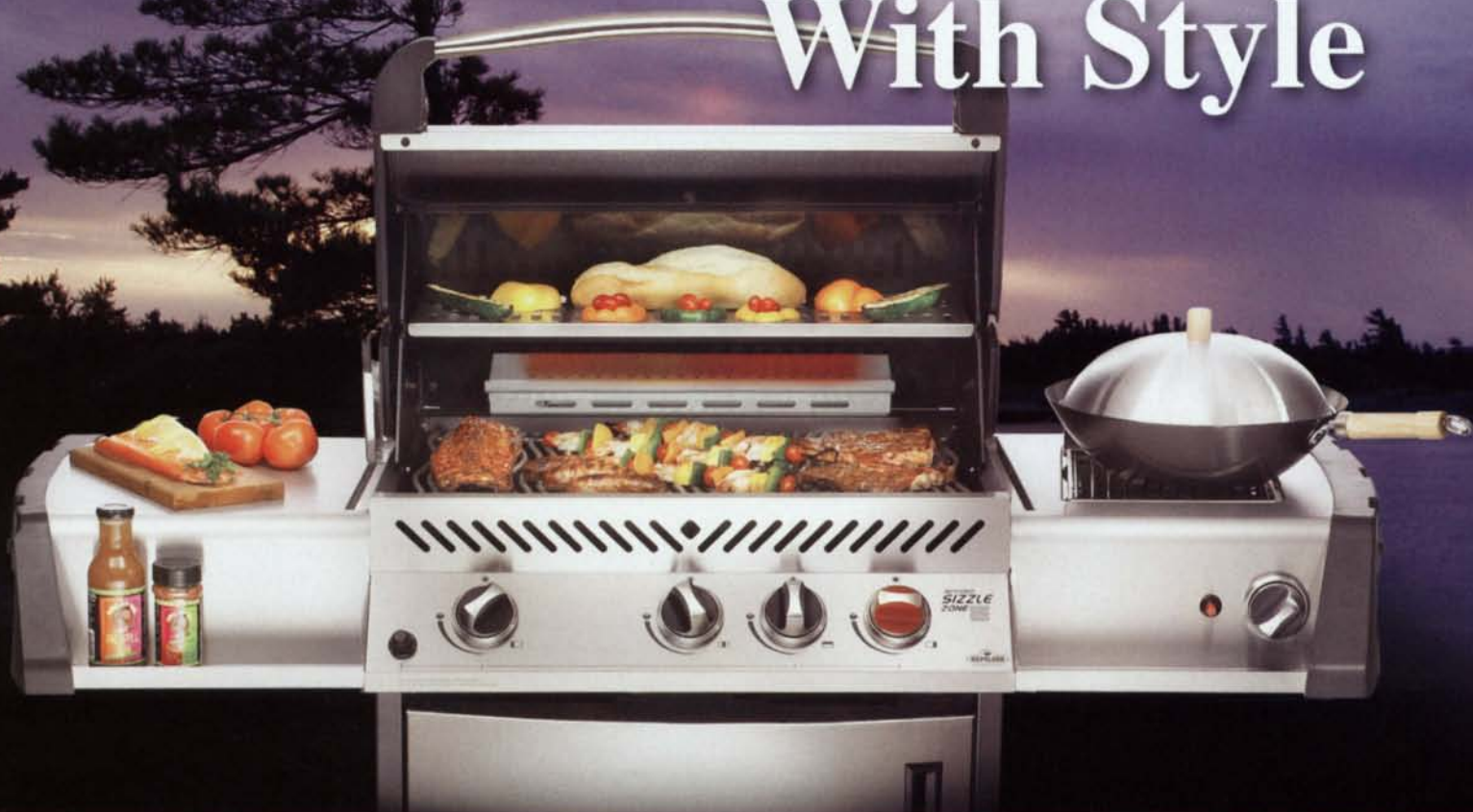
Here's how to make them:

Scoop up about $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of cold risotto at a time and shape into patties about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick and 3 inches wide. Coat the cakes in coarse dry breadcrumbs or panko, pressing to help the crumbs adhere—it's all right if

the cake isn't completely covered in crumbs.

Heat $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup) of vegetable or olive oil in a 10-inch straight-sided sauté pan over medium heat. Fry the cakes in batches of four or five until golden brown on both sides, about 3 minutes per side (if necessary, adjust the heat to keep the oil at the right temperature). Transfer with a slotted spatula to paper towels to drain for a few minutes before serving. If making multiple batches, keep the cakes warm in a low (200°F) oven. Serve with lightly dressed salad greens or steamed green beans.

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ingredient

Paprika



In American cooking, paprika seems to be used more as a food coloring than as a spice. Sprinkled over deviled eggs and potato salads, it looks pretty and doesn't taste like much. But heat it gently in oil and this shy spice blossoms, exuding a sweet flavor with rich earthy undertones and a heat level that ranges from gentle to spicy-hot, depending on the variety of paprika.

Buying and cooking

Look for paprika packaged in a tin with a tight-fitting lid and store it away from light and heat. Heating it in a little oil or butter helps bring out the flavor, but because of the high sugar content, it burns easily, so keep the heat low and the time short. It's usually best to add it off the heat at the end of sautéing, before adding liquids.

Two distinctive styles

Ground from dried chiles, paprika plays an honored role in both Hungarian and Spanish cuisines. Each country has a distinctive style of paprika, both of which are generally better than the generic paprika found in supermarkets.

Hungarian paprika is produced around the southern cities of Szeged and Kalosca. Traditionally, the ripened chiles were strung up to dry in the sun, but they are now more commonly dried in commercial ovens. Hungarian paprika is available in several heat levels and grinds, including special, mild, *delikatess*, semisweet, sweet, and hot, but only the latter two are

commonly found in the United States. Used in foods like kielbasa, chicken paprikás, and goulash, Hungarian paprika is especially good in rich dishes with sour cream, potatoes, egg noodles, cabbage, or meat. It can be used generously—think tablespoons.

Spanish paprika or *pimentón* comes from western Spain's La Vera valley. It differs from Hungarian paprika in that the chiles are dried over smoldering oak logs, giving them a smoky flavor. It comes in three heat levels: *dulce*, *agridulce*, and *picante* (sweet, bittersweet, and hot). It's a key ingredient in paella, chorizo, and many tapas dishes. In the United States, *pimentón* isn't as commonly available as Hungarian paprika, but it's well worth seeking out (see Where To Find It, p. 80). Add a little *pimentón* to scrambled eggs, black-bean chili, or roasted potatoes. It's delicious wherever you'd like a smoky flavor, but remember that smokiness can easily overwhelm a dish, so start experimenting by using only 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon.

—Allison Ebri, test kitchen associate



Paprika Chicken with Kielbasa

Serves six.

This is a riff on a traditional Hungarian dish, Chicken Paprikás. I've added kielbasa and *pimentón* because I love the smoky flavor they contribute.

- 6 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs (about 2 pounds)**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 4 to 5 tablespoons olive oil**
- 1 pound kielbasa, cut on the diagonal into 12 chunks**
- 1 medium onion, small diced**
- 2 medium garlic cloves, chopped**
- 2 medium green bell peppers, medium diced**
- 2 tablespoons sweet Hungarian paprika**
- 1 teaspoon sweet smoked Spanish paprika (*pimentón*)**
- 1 28-ounce can diced tomatoes**
- 1 cup low-salt chicken broth**
- 1/2 cup sour cream**
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley**

Season the chicken on both sides with 3/4 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon pepper. Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a 6-quart Dutch oven over medium-high heat until shimmering hot. Sear the chicken on both sides until nicely golden brown, about 8 minutes total. Transfer the chicken to a plate and sear the cut ends of the kielbasa until golden brown, about 2 minutes total. Transfer the kielbasa to the plate with the chicken. Pour off and discard the fat from the pan.

Add 2 more tablespoons of the oil, reduce the heat to medium, and cook the onion, stirring occasionally, until beginning to soften, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until fragrant and the onions are completely soft and golden, 2 to 3 minutes more. Push the onions and garlic to one side of the pan and add 1 tablespoon of olive oil if the pan looks dry. Add the peppers and cook, stirring once or twice, until beginning to brown, 4 to 5 minutes.

Remove the pot from the heat, add both of the paprikas and stir together with all the vegetables for 30 seconds. Return the pot to the heat and add the tomatoes, chicken broth, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Immerse the chicken in the sauce and scatter the kielbasa on top. Cover and simmer over medium-low heat until the thighs are cooked through (cut into a thigh near the bone to check for doneness), 25 to 30 minutes. Remove the skin from the chicken if you like. Stir in the sour cream, season with salt to taste and serve sprinkled with parsley.

Make ahead: This can be made up to three days ahead without adding the sour cream. Reheat over medium heat and stir in the sour cream as directed.



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Boysenberry Blueberry Pie



1 jar **DICKINSON'S®** Pure Seedless Boysenberry Preserves
2 9" Pie Crusts
1/3 c. Flour
4 c. Fresh Blueberries
Optional: Vanilla Bean Ice Cream

Heat oven to 400°F. Combine flour with berries; fold in preserves. Place one crust in a 9" pie pan and pour mixture into crust. Cover with second crust, seal and crimp edges. Cut slits in the top of crust and bake for 45 minutes. Cool slightly before serving. Serve optional with vanilla bean ice cream. Makes 8 servings.



Angel Cake Supreme



1 jar **DICKINSON'S®** Pure Seedless Cascade Mountain™ Red Raspberry Preserves
1 jar **DICKINSON'S®** Lemon Curd
2 Tbsp. Water
1 10"-round Angel Food Cake
1 8-oz. container Whipped Topping
3/4 c. Powdered Sugar
Optional: Raspberries, fresh or frozen

In a small bowl, mix preserves and water; set aside. Split cake in half, horizontally. Spread curd on bottom half, replace top. Blend 1/2 of preserves mixture with whipped topping and powdered sugar; frost cake. Drizzle remaining preserves over top of cake. Garnish with optional raspberries. Makes 12 servings.



Blackberry Cheesecake Shakes

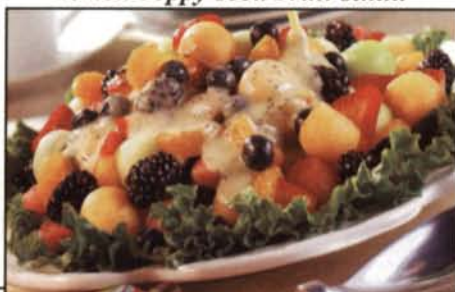


1 jar **DICKINSON'S®** Pure Seedless Marion Blackberry Preserves
3 c. Vanilla Bean Ice Cream
4 oz. Cream Cheese
1/2 tsp. Almond Extract
3/4 c. Milk
Optional: Whipped Cream

Combine all ingredients in a blender and process until smooth. Serve in 6 chilled glasses. Garnish with optional whipped cream. Makes 6 servings. NOTE: The preserves and cream cheese mixture makes this shake an extra-special gourmet dessert!



Lemon Poppy Seed Fruit Salad



1 jar **DICKINSON'S®** Lemon Curd
1/2 c. Orange Juice
1/4 c. Oil
1 Tbsp. Poppy Seeds
Lettuce Leaves
6 c. Assorted Fruit such as orange segments, melon balls and various berries
Optional: 1 tsp. Orange Peel, grated

In a blender, combine curd and juice. Cover and blend. Gradually add oil, processing until smooth. Stir in poppy seeds. Arrange fruit on lettuce leaves on a large platter. Spoon dressing over fruit just before serving. Makes 6 servings. NOTE: Lime lovers, try substituting **Dickinson's** Lime Curd.



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Purely The Finest®

tasting panel

Plain fresh goat cheese

It's not a secret that a smattering of tangy goat cheese can resuscitate even the dullest, most uninspired salad—not to mention a boring frittata or a lackluster quiche. Also known as *chèvre*, fresh, unripened goat cheese has enough zing to perk up almost any dish, and it can be lovely by itself, too, with crisp, raw veggies or on a piece of crusty artisanal bread.

To help us navigate the maze of goat cheese brands out there, we conducted a blind tasting of nine widely available ones, both domestic and imported. Some of the cheeses we tasted were surprisingly assertive, with a strong gamey quality that panelists found somewhat objectionable. With the exception of a few adventurous tasters, our panel tended to gravitate toward the milder cheeses that had a cleaner, more balanced flavor.

—Laura Giannatempo, assistant editor



ILE DE FRANCE

\$3.99 (4 ounces)

The only imported cheese in our top five list, Ile de France epitomizes our panelists' ideal goat cheese: fresh and mildly tangy with a discernible goat-milk flavor and a firm but creamy mouth-feel. We found this cheese to have a lot of character without being too assertive or excessively gamey.

Runners-up Goat cheese numbered in order of preference; prices will vary.



2 MONTCHEVRÉ

\$3.99 (4 ounces)

There's no question that this goat cheese had an appealing texture. Almost everyone on the panel described it as very creamy and smooth. The flavor, too, was pleasantly mild and rich with an adequate level of acidity and a satisfying goat-milk presence.



3 CYPRESS GROVE CHÈVRE

\$4.99 (5 ounces)

Although it was among the more aggressive-tasting of the bunch, we liked this tart, zippy cheese with its slightly nutty undertone. It was rich and goaty, but not overwhelmingly gamey, as were the other assertive cheeses we tasted. Overall, tasters found it pleasingly creamy if a bit dense.



4 VERMONT BUTTER & CHEESE

\$3.99 (4 ounces)

On the mild side of the spectrum, this Vermont Chèvre earned a respectable fourth position with its clean, no-frills flavor and subdued personality. A good acidity level and a medium tang gave it a bit of character, and its melt-in-your-mouth texture was appealing.



5 LAURA CHENEL

\$5.99 (8 ounces)

This cheese had our panel divided. Some tasters found it brightly tangy, pleasantly herbaceous, and goaty. Others thought it was a bit bland with only a slight hint of goat. The texture failed to impress our panelists across the board. The words "chalky" and "gritty" appeared repeatedly. ♦

While the goat cheeses pictured here are our top five picks, we also tasted the following brands (in alphabetical order): Couturier Soignon, Montrachet, President, and Redwood Hill Farm.

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Layer Cakes, p. 64

Visit Cooking.com (800-663-8810) for 9x2-inch round cake pans (from \$11.95) and for cooling racks (from \$7.95). To line your cake pans, parchment rounds are handy; a package of two dozen 9-inch rounds sells for \$3.95 at Bakerscatalogue.com (800-827-6836).

From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72

Spanish smoked paprika (preferably *pimentón de la Vera*) is mostly available in specialty groceries, but you should have no trouble finding Hungarian paprika in many supermarkets. To mail order both Spanish and Hungarian paprika, visit Thespacehouse.com (312-274-0378), where 2- to 2.5-ounce jars range from \$2.88 to \$3.98 (larger amounts are also available).

For Arborio, Carnaroli, Vialone Nano, and Baldo rice, see the source under Risotto, at left.

In Season, p. 16

Asparagus crowns (ready-to-plant roots) are available at many garden centers; you can also order them from most vegetable seed catalogs, including [The Cook's Garden](http://TheCook'sGarden.com) (Cooksgarden.com, 800-457-9703).



Pork Tenderloin, p. 50

A heavy pounder with a straight up-and-down handle will give you the most evenly pounded pork tenderloin. We like Norpro's Grip-EZ meat pounder, which sells for \$18.95 at Amazon.com.



Risotto, p. 54

Lidia Bastianich recommends Arborio or Carnaroli rice for risotto. While Arborio rice is available in many supermarkets, you're more likely to find Carnaroli, as well as varieties like Vialone Nano and Baldo, in specialty markets. Online, all four types are available at Chefshop.com (877-337-2491), where prices start at \$4.49 per package.

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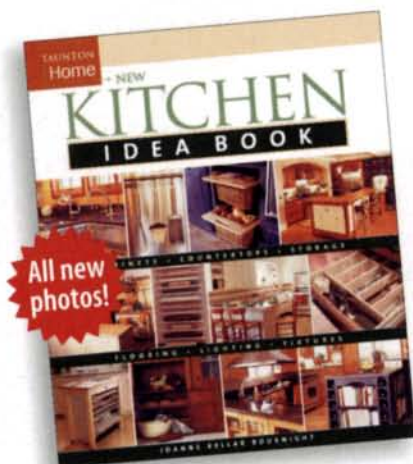
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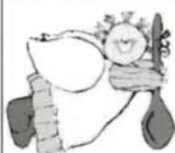
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Recipe	Page	Calories		Protein	Carb	Fats (g)				Chol.	Sodium	Fiber	Notes
		total	from fat	(g)	(g)	total	sat	mono	poly	(mg)	(mg)	(g)	
Letters	10												
Caramelized Fennel Confit		180	110	2	14	13	4.5	6	1	15	220	4	based on 4 servings
In Season	16												
Creamy Asparagus Soup		120	70	2	11	8	5	2	1	25	230	2	based on 8 servings
Spring Fling	38												
Goat Cheese Spread with Herbs & Olive Oil		210	140	8	7	16	8	6	1	25	330	0	based on 6 servings, w/o veg.
Salad of Roast Chicken & Spring Vegetables w/ Lemony Dressing		510	325	34	15	36	6	22	7	85	550	5	based on 6 servings
Garlic-Parmesan Bread		370	190	8	38	21	11	6	2	45	650	2	based on 6 servings
Chocolate-Raspberry Cookies & Cream		310	160	3	36	18	10	5	1	50	200	4	based on 6 servings
Osso Buco	43												
Osso Buco		360	140	24	26	15	4	9	1.5	85	1010	5	based on 6 servings
Vegetable Sauces	46												
Curry-Yogurt Sauce		40	30	1	2	3.5	2	1	0	10	60	0	per 1/6 recipe, w/o veg.
Balsamic-Bacon Vinaigrette Sauce		80	70	1	1	8	1	5	1	0	100	0	per 1/6 recipe, w/o veg.
Lemony Tahini Sauce		45	35	1	2	4	0.5	1.5	1.5	0	25	0	per 1/6 recipe, w/o veg.
Lemony Brown-Butter Sauce w/ Chives		70	70	0	1	8	5	2	0	20	50	0	per 1/6 recipe, w/o veg.
Peppercorn-Parmesan Cream Sauce		40	35	1	1	4	2	1	0	35	45	0	per 1/6 recipe, w/o veg.
Pork Tenderloin	50												
Spinach & Mushroom-Stuffed Tenderloin w/ Sherry Cream Sauce		390	220	31	11	25	6	15	2.5	90	540	3	based on 4 servings
Spicy Korean-Style Tenderloin Medallions w/ Asian Slaw		290	150	21	12	17	2	9	4.5	55	1180	2	based on 6 servings
Grilled Spice-Rubbed Tenderloin w/ Honey-Chipotle Barbecue Sauce		290	50	31	29	6	2	2	0.5	85	610	2	based on 6 servings
Risotto	54												
Saffron & Shrimp Risotto		550	150	28	64	17	5	9	2.5	125	610	2	based on 6 servings, w/o cheese
Tilapia	60												
Peanut-Crusted Tilapia w/ Frizzled Ginger and Scallions		420	230	39	13	26	5	11	7	140	450	4	based on 2 servings
Herb-Coated Tilapia w/ Lemon		195	85	26	1	10	2	5	1	90	250	1	based on 4 servings
Spice-Rubbed Tilapia w/ Tomatillo, Black Bean & Mango Salad		500	250	32	32	30	4	11	11	90	440	7	based on 4 servings
Crispy Breaded Tilapia w/ Classic Tartar Sauce		410	260	28	10	29	5	1.5	1	150	660	1	based on 4 servings
Layer Cakes	64												
Four-Layer Cake w/ Whipped Cream and Berries		580	320	7	59	36	22	10	1.5	185	330	2	based on 12 servings
Four-Layer Cake w/ Buttercream		800	460	7	80	52	32	14	2	205	350	0	based on 12 servings
Test Kitchen	72												
Paprika Chicken w/ Kielbasa		540	330	36	15	37	11	17	5	135	1290	2	based on 6 servings
Quick & Delicious	86c												
Creamy Tomato Soup w/ Zucchini		530	360	9	33	40	25	11	1.5	130	1460	8	based on 4 servings
Spice-Crusted Salmon		410	210	44	4	24	3.5	11	7	120	470	2	based on 6 servings
Broiled Spice-Rubbed Lamb Chops		250	170	16	2	19	5	12	1.5	50	430	1	based on 6 servings
Paprika Shrimp w/ Orange & Avocado Salsa		290	160	25	10	18	2.5	12	2.5	220	590	4	based on 6 servings
Fettuccine w/ Arugula-Walnut Pesto		600	320	13	59	36	4.5	16	13	0	210	3	based on 6 servings
Roasted Trout w/ Lemon & Walnut-Browned Butter		350	230	28	5	25	12	6	5	120	440	2	based on 6 servings
Chicken Thighs w/ Braised Fennel, Scallions & Olives		650	380	40	23	43	8	26	6	130	1280	7	based on 4 servings

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at Nutritional Solutions in Melville, New York. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in the

calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used. When the

quantity of salt and pepper aren't specified, the analysis is based on 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/8 teaspoon pepper per serving for entrées, and 1/8 teaspoon salt and 1/16 teaspoon pepper per serving for side dishes.



an easy meal for any day

Australian Lamb makes a delicious holiday highlight. It's also easy and quick to prepare for everyday meals. Flavorful chops, shanks or legs are perfect for roasting, grilling or braising in minutes. And because Australian Lamb grazes on lush, green pastures, it's mild, lean and rich in nutrients—ideal for everyone at your table, any time of the year.

Australian Lamb Leg Sandwiches with Mint-Pickled Cucumber

1 Australian leg of lamb, medium rare
salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
4 pieces of a baguette or preferred bread
extra-virgin olive oil
1 cucumber
¼ cup rice wine or wine vinegar
1 teaspoon sugar
½ teaspoon of sea salt
¼ cup chopped fresh mint
1 dash Tabasco or Worcestershire sauce

1. Slice cucumber diagonally and very thin. (Try a vegetable peeler, cheese slicer or mandoline.) Place in a large, shallow bowl. Warm vinegar in a small saucepan. Add

sugar and salt, mixing until dissolved. Add mint and Tabasco and remove from heat. Pour over the cucumber and mix well. Allow to cool to room temperature, then cover and refrigerate for 1 hour or overnight.

2. Just before serving, drizzle the bread with oil. Slice the lamb thinly and arrange on one side of the baguette. Top with the cucumber, season with salt and pepper to taste. Enjoy!

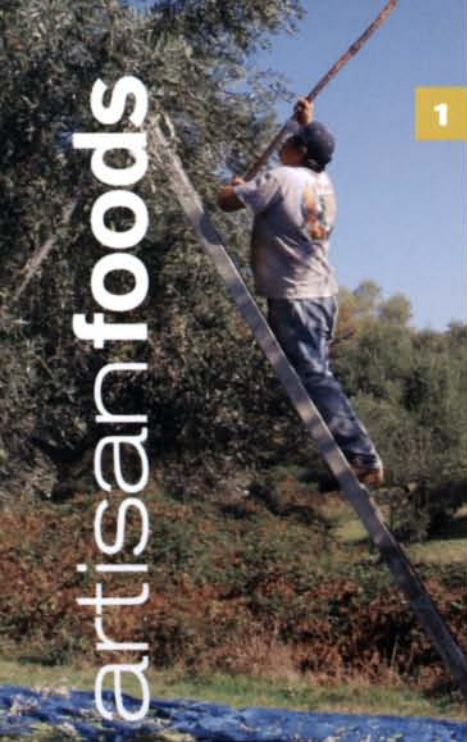
To roast the lamb, season to taste and roast at 325-350° F about 20 minutes per pound, until internal temperature reaches 130-135° (medium rare). If serving warm, allow meat to rest for 10 minutes before slicing.

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Fresh, Easy and Delicious.



1



2

Olive Oil

big flavor from small batches

When Michael Keller got his first taste of just-pressed olive oil—fragrant and still cloudy from pressing—he couldn't believe how good it was. "It was alive, singing. I was hooked," he says.

In the late 1990s, inspired by the early successes of California's new olive oil producers, Michael began picking olives from abandoned trees in Marin County and hauling them to the now-famous McEvoy Ranch to press them into oil. It wasn't long before he and his wife, Monica, bought a small orchard in Yuba County, near Sacramento, and started Calolea Olive Oil. Almost immediately, their intensely fruity and spicy Mission blend won Best of Class at the prestigious Los Angeles County Fair two years in a row.

The Kellers grow several varieties of olives on their beautiful 30-acre estate, including Mission, Manzanilla, and Sevillano. With the help of another worker during harvest, husband and wife handpick the olives early in the season, when many are still green, to get a punchier, peppery flavor. They take the olives to a neighboring press within 24 hours (to keep the acidity low) and store the oil in dark tanks until it's bottled to order—unfiltered. The Kellers bottle only about 1,000 gallons a year of their prized oil, which they sell to local stores and farmers' markets or by mail order.

—Laura Giannatempo, assistant editor



3



4



5



6



7

1. & 2. Olives are picked the old-fashioned way: Jaime Reynoso gently beats the branches to cause the olives to fall on a tarp. The olives are then collected into buckets. **3.** Michael Keller pours just-picked olives through a traditional, low-tech de-leafer (a bare-bones sieve) to separate the fruit from the leaves. **4. & 5.** Butte View Olive Company's Lewis Johnson, the neighbor

who presses Michael's olives, pours them into a vat where they're picked up by a conveyor belt and washed. **6. & 7.** Olives are ground to a paste, which is mixed for 20 to 40 minutes to help the oil separate; a centrifuge (shown here) then spins the paste to extract the oil. Just-pressed olive oil is stored in barrels, where the particles that make it cloudy settle to the bottom.

BY JULIANNA GRIMES
BOTTCHER

In this spring collection, you won't find time-consuming recipes or long ingredient lists, but you'll still get complex flavors and delicious results. The key to coaxing sublime flavor from few ingredients is to start with the freshest and best-quality ingredients you can find, then season them assertively. Freshly ground spices and toasted seeds make lively spice rubs, while citrus, fresh herbs, and olives add an extra level of brightness. These big flavors require little effort and take no time to master.



Paprika Shrimp with Orange & Avocado Salsa

Serves six.

2 medium navel oranges
5 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt
1 ripe avocado, cut into medium dice
1/3 cup thinly sliced scallions (from about 4 slender scallions, both white and green parts)
1 Tbs. fresh lime juice
2 tsp. sweet paprika, preferably Hungarian
1/2 tsp. ground cumin
1 tsp. Tabasco or other hot sauce
1 1/2 lb. large (21 to 25 count) shrimp, peeled and deveined

In the oven, position a rack 4 inches from the broiler and heat the broiler to high.

Segment the oranges:

Slice the ends off one of the oranges with a small, sharp knife. Stand the orange on one of its cut ends and slice off the skin in strips, cutting below the bitter white pith. Working over a small bowl, cut the orange segments free from the membrane, letting each segment fall into the

bowl as you go. Squeeze any remaining juice from the membranes into the bowl. Repeat with the other orange. Cut all of the orange segments in half crosswise and return them to the bowl. Add 2 Tbs. of the olive oil, 3/4 tsp. salt, the avocado, scallions, and lime juice to the oranges and toss gently to combine.

Combine the remaining 3 Tbs. of the oil, 1 tsp. salt, the paprika, cumin, and Tabasco in a medium bowl; stir well. Add the shrimp, tossing to coat. Arrange the shrimp on a foil-lined rimmed baking sheet. Broil until the shrimp are opaque and cooked through, about 4 minutes. Serve the shrimp with the salsa.

Serving suggestion:
Saffron rice makes a nice accompaniment.



Broiled Spice-Rubbed Lamb Chops

Serves four to six.

¼ cup plus 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
¼ cup fresh lime juice
12 lamb rib chops, preferably Australian (about 1¾ lb.)
1 Tbs. ground cumin
2 tsp. ground coriander
½ tsp. ground cinnamon
¼ tsp. ground cloves
¼ tsp. ground cayenne
2 cloves garlic, minced
Kosher salt

In the oven, position a rack 4 inches from the broiler and heat the broiler to high.

Combine ¼ cup of the olive oil and the lime juice in a wide, shallow dish. Put the lamb chops in the oil mixture and marinate, turning once, for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, in a small bowl, combine the remaining 2 Tbs. oil, cumin, coriander, cinnamon, cloves, cayenne, and garlic; stir well.

Remove the chops from the marinade and arrange them on a rack fitted over a foil-lined rimmed baking sheet. Sprinkle 2 tsp. salt evenly all over both sides of the lamb. With a brush or your fingers, dab the spice mixture onto both sides of the chops. Broil, turning halfway through cooking, until the chops are nicely browned on both sides and cooked to your liking, 8 minutes total for medium.

Serving suggestion:

Serve with couscous tossed with chopped scallions and diced tomato; add a dollop of plain yogurt, if you like.

Roasted Trout with Lemon & Walnut-Browned Butter

Serves four to six.

8 rainbow trout fillets (2 to 2½ lb.); see note
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
½ cup unsalted butter
¼ cup finely chopped fresh parsley
2 Tbs. finely chopped fresh tarragon
24 ⅛-inch-thick lemon slices (2 to 3 lemons)
¼ cup chopped walnuts

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F.

Arrange the trout skin side down on a foil-lined rimmed baking sheet. Sprinkle 2 tsp. salt and 1 tsp. pepper evenly over the trout. In a small saucepan, melt the butter and drizzle 4 Tbs. of it evenly over the fillets. Sprinkle the trout evenly with the parsley and the tarragon. Arrange 3 lemon slices over each fillet. Roast until the fillets flake easily when pricked with a fork, 10 to 12 minutes.

Meanwhile, set the saucepan with the remaining melted butter over medium heat.

Cook until lightly browned and fragrant, 3 to 5 minutes. Immediately remove from the heat and stir in the walnuts; keep warm.

When the trout is done, use a large spatula to transfer the fillets to dinner plates—if the skin sticks to the foil, lift up only the flesh. Swirl the walnut butter around and then spoon it over the trout.

Note: In the store, rainbow trout are sometimes sold as whole, cleaned fish; if this is how you find them, ask the fish seller to cut them into fillets and remove the fins.

Serving suggestion:

Serve with buttered baby red potatoes tossed with chopped fresh dill.



Fettuccine with Arugula-Walnut Pesto

Serves four to six.

4 oz. arugula, washed and spun dry (about 3 lightly packed cups)
½ cup freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano; more for sprinkling
½ cup walnuts, toasted
2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
1 clove garlic, smashed and peeled
Kosher salt
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
¼ cup walnut oil
1 lb. dried fettuccine

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil over high heat.

Meanwhile, put the arugula, Parmigiano, walnuts, lemon juice, garlic, and 1 tsp. salt into a food processor, and process until the mixture is finely ground, 30 to 60 seconds. In a measuring cup, combine the olive oil and walnut oil. With the food

processor running, drizzle the oil through the feed tube, and process the mixture until mostly smooth.

Cook the fettuccine in the boiling water until it's al dente, 6 to 8 minutes. Drain. In a medium bowl, toss the fettuccine with enough of the pesto to generously coat the pasta. Serve sprinkled with extra Parmigiano, if desired.

Note: Walnut oil smooths out the peppery bite of the arugula, but you can omit it and just use more extra-virgin olive oil instead.

Serving suggestion:

A Caesar salad, served either with or after the pasta, is a good complement.



Chicken Thighs with Braised Fennel, Scallions & Olives

Serves four.

5 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
2 small to medium fennel bulbs (about 12 oz. each), trimmed, quartered lengthwise, cored, and sliced lengthwise into ¼-inch-thick slices
Kosher salt
1 bunch scallions (about 8), trimmed and cut into 2-inch pieces
1 cup pitted Kalamata olives
½ cup all-purpose flour
8 boneless, skinless chicken thighs (about 1¾ lb.)
Freshly ground black pepper
½ cup white wine
½ cup low-sodium chicken broth

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 425°F.

Heat 2 Tbs. of the oil in a 12-inch heavy-duty skillet over high heat. Add the fennel, sprinkle with salt, and cook, stirring occasionally, until nicely browned in places, about 5 minutes—don't stir too often or the fennel won't brown. Remove the skillet from the heat. Transfer the fennel to a 9x13-inch baking pan, spreading it evenly. Layer the scallions on top of the fennel, sprinkle with ½ tsp. salt, and scatter the olives over the scallions.

Put the flour in a shallow dish. Trim any excess fat from the chicken and season the chicken with 1 tsp. salt and ½ tsp. pepper. Dredge the chicken in the flour.

Heat the remaining 3 Tbs. oil in the skillet over high heat. Turn on the exhaust fan. When the oil is very hot, add the chicken (it may be a tight fit, but the chicken will shrink as it cooks) and sear until the first side is well browned, 3 to 4 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium-high, flip the chicken using tongs, and cook until the second side is well browned, about another 3 minutes.

Arrange the thighs on top of the vegetables. Carefully pour the wine into the skillet and cook over medium-high heat, scraping up bits from the pan with a wooden spoon, until the wine reduces by half, about 1 minute. Add the broth and bring to a simmer. Pour the wine mixture over the chicken and bake until the chicken is cooked through and the fennel is tender, 15 to 20 minutes.

Serving suggestion:

Serve with rice pilaf with lemon zest and chopped fresh parsley.



Spice-Crusted Salmon

Serves six.

¼ cup coarsely chopped fresh ginger
2 Tbs. sesame seeds
2 Tbs. coriander seeds
1 Tbs. cumin seeds
1 Tbs. fennel seeds
½ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
1 clove garlic
3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for oiling the salmon
1 2½-lb. salmon fillet, skin on
Kosher salt

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F.

Combine the ginger, sesame seeds, coriander seeds, cumin seeds, fennel seeds, red pepper flakes, and garlic in a food processor and process until the mixture is finely chopped, about 30

seconds. With the motor running, drizzle the oil through the feed tube and process, stopping to scrape down the sides, until the mixture forms a paste, about 20 seconds.

Rub oil on the salmon skin, and put the salmon, skin side down, on a rack set on a rimmed baking sheet. Sprinkle 2 tsp. salt evenly over the salmon. Using your hands, spread the spice paste onto the salmon. Roast until the salmon is cooked to your liking, 16 to 18 minutes for medium-rare.

Serving suggestion:

Serve with sautéed sugar snap peas and a wedge of lemon.

Creamy Tomato Soup with Zucchini

Serves four as a light main course.

6 Tbs. unsalted butter
3 medium zucchini (about 1½ pounds), cut into medium dice
Kosher salt
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup chopped yellow onion
3 15-oz. cans whole peeled tomatoes, drained
1½ cups low-salt chicken broth
½ cup dry white wine
1 cup heavy cream
½ cup fresh basil leaves, chopped, for garnish

Melt 4 Tbs. of the butter in a large stockpot over medium-high heat. Add the zucchini and 1 tsp. salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until the zucchini is crisp-tender but not browned, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the zucchini mixture to a medium bowl.

Melt the remaining 2 Tbs. butter in the stockpot over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring, until it becomes translucent, about

3 minutes. Increase the heat to high, add the tomatoes and 1 tsp. salt to the pot, and cook, stirring constantly for 1 minute. Add the chicken broth and the wine, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the liquid has reduced by half, about 20 minutes.

Remove the stockpot from the heat and let the tomato mixture cool slightly. Purée the soup in the pot with a hand blender or in batches in a regular blender. If you use a regular blender, return the soup to the pot. Add the cream. Bring to a boil and cook until heated through, about 2 minutes. Stir the zucchini into the soup. Garnish each serving with some of the chopped fresh basil.

Serving suggestion:

Serve with toasted baguette slices smeared with goat cheese.

Julianna Grimes Bottcher, a food writer and recipe developer, owns Flavor Matters, a food consulting business. ♦